

'A showdown between good and evil'

Saddam offers UN chief little cause for hope

From JOHN HOLLAND in BAGHDAD and GEORGE BROCK in GENEVA

AS JAVIER Pérez de Cuéllar, the secretary-general of the United Nations and the world's last messenger for peace, flew to Baghdad last night President Saddam Hussein gave him a taste of the reception he can expect, declaring that the coming contest was a battle between the forces of good and evil.

"This is a showdown between the infidel and believers, between good and evil," he told a conference of radical Muslims in Baghdad, dimming hopes of a compromise when Señor Pérez de Cuéllar arrives in the Iraqi capital this morning.

The meeting will come just four days before the UN deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait or face attack by the American-led troops massed in the Gulf. Señor de Cuéllar confirmed that one of the options to be discussed would be the deployment of neutral UN forces in Kuwait after the withdrawal of Iraqi troops.

The increasing tension over the stand-off was dramatically highlighted across the world: in Israel jet fighters stood poised, with pilots already seated in the cockpits, while in Washington anti-war protesters disrupted the Senate debate on the Middle East shouting "No blood for oil" and "No war for Bush".

Douglas Hurd, the foreign secretary, began a mission of reassurance for the frontline states in the anti-Iraqi alliance by urging the leaders of Bahrain to look beyond the impending conflict and address the question of their long-term security needs.

He arrived in Bahrain, which is 300 miles from Iraq and within range of its Scud missiles, amid heightening security as the authorities prepared to carry out the first air raid siren drill. The foreign secretary's message was upbeat, accentuating the positive at a time when there were few signs that hostilities could be averted.

Mr Hurd's positive approach to his Arab allies was more than matched by Saddam's baroque of his people: "We have prepared all possible means to confront... and inflict defeat on the aggressors and the infidel," he said.

Israel-occupied lands would be restored to Palestinians, he said, apparently calling for a jihad or holy war and attempting to rally the rest of the Arab world to his cause should the final attempts at diplomacy fail. "Victory is close and Palestine will return to its people with the help of God almighty."

Meanwhile, several Western embassies planned to evacuate their diplomatic staff today on a specially-chartered Iraqi Airways flight due to leave Baghdad for Frankfurt.

GULF MOVES

UNITED NATIONS: Señor Pérez de Cuéllar will discuss the possible role of UN forces or observers during an Iraqi withdrawal when he meets Saddam in Baghdad today. Page 6

MAJOR'S VIEW: John Major said time was running out for attempts at finding a peaceful solution in the Gulf but war was not inevitable. Page 6

ISRAEL: President Bush is sending a top official to Jerusalem to emphasise that Israel must not launch a pre-emptive strike against Iraq. Pages 6, 7

PETROL: Britain's big oil companies signalled the start of rapidly increasing petrol prices with a rise at the pumps of 6.5p a gallon. Page 7

WAR PLANS: Politicians and military commanders have drawn up and agreed on a war plan. Page 7

American embassy officials said they had received a deluge of requests from other Western embassies who also wished to fly personnel out of the country.

"This is not an evacuation flight," an official said. "This plane has been chartered by the US government for the benefit of primarily US diplomats and journalists."

Iraqis braced themselves for the possibility of war in the wake of Saddam's headline speech, which was interrupted numerous times by the mainly Iraqi audience who shouted their approval for their leader. He told the Muslim conference that Iraq was "not frightened. We are seeing victory approaching toward us balanced with faith, which is in our hearts and in our steps".

Western observers said it was perhaps the most detailed and open speech Saddam had made about his plans for fighting the West since the Gulf conflict began. He described how Iraqi pilots would carry out their duties even if their equipment was jammed by sophisticated Western devices, and pledged that the Americans would be "deceived by wolves on the flat open spaces of southern Iraq".

"We will not leave the Americans to stay quiet," he said and indicated that Iraq's loyal troops would fight with rifles and grenades to repel all the best military technology the West could muster.

Despite the Iraqi leader's tough words, however, one Western official noted that he has "gone to the brink before with the faithful and taken a long look into the abyss of war before doing a quick about-face".

Embassies that removed their staff yesterday included the Austrians, the Italians and the Spanish. The French have not yet received final word from Paris on a departure from Baghdad, but embassy officials said they were likely to stay after today as they expected the possibility of a new French initiative.

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Equity investors, page 36



Human barrier: Lithuanians stand defiantly in front of an armoured vehicle as Soviet troops tried yesterday to seize the press centre in Vilnius



Landsbergis: "Blood has been spilt"

Moves 'to prevent civil war'

From BRUCE CLARK in MOSCOW

SOVIET officials last night sought to present the clampdown in Lithuania as a move to prevent civil war.

State television reported with approval the pro-Soviet minority in the Lithuanian Communist movement has set up a "committee of national salvation" which would take responsibility for the territory's future.

Rafik Nishanov, chairman of one of the two parliamentary chambers, claimed that strikes at Moscow-controlled factories and public services in Lithuania indicated widespread support for Kremlin rule. He said an anti-independence rally in Vilnius had sent delegates to Vytautas Landsbergis, the Lithuanian president, demanding he submit to President Gorbachev or step aside in favour of a national salvation committee.

Egidius Bickauskas, Lithuania's chief representative in Moscow, denounced the strikes and anti-independence protests as a "planned scenario" and said Soviet actions were designed to stir up tension so as to legitimize the use of force.

More backing: An ITN/Harris poll for News At Ten found that 56 per cent of the British public supported military action. But 38 per cent believed that sanctions should be given several more months to succeed.

Full report, page 7

Battle-ready Soviet troops seize buildings in Lithuanian capital

From NICK WORRALL in VILNIUS

SOVIET troops yesterday smashed their way into the headquarters of the Lithuanian defence department and the republic's main press centre.

Without warning, 60 armed Soviet infantrymen in battle-dress, steel helmets and flak jackets fired into the air and charged into a knot of singing people barring their way into the press complex. Bullets ricocheted off the concrete parapet above.

The leading troops used their rifles as clubs and the building's defenders kicked and punched in return. Soldiers at the back continued to fire.

It was a brutal attempt by Moscow to reimpose communist power on the tiny state.

The action against the press centre was similar to last week's takeover by special interior ministry forces of a press centre in neighbouring Latvia. The buildings were seized a few minutes after 11am. Moments later, an official rushed into the Lithuanian parliament and interrupted the opening speech by Albertas Simenas, the newly elected premier, to say troops had opened fire at the defence building.

For the fourth day running, a crowd of pro-independence demonstrators was standing outside the parliament. Many people were jeering at a smaller counter-demonstration by remnants of the local Communist party protesting at imminent food-price increases.

As word spread about the army action, protesters way back from Whitehall to operation headquarters. A thief broke into the car while parked outside a used car dealer's in Ealing, west London.

The briefcase was later found in north London. For some weeks the MoD asked for no press coverage while police launched a hunt for the thief.

of immunity if the thief came forward to reveal what had happened to the computer, used to brief the prime minister in December.

The computer and a briefcase were taken from the car of Wing Commander David Farquhar, a staff officer to the RAF commander in overall control of British forces deployment, as he was on his

way back from Whitehall to operation headquarters. A thief broke into the car while parked outside a used car dealer's in Ealing, west London.

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Manon is an opulent three-act piece to Massenet's music based on the stormy love affair between a prostitute, Manon, and a student, des Grieux. The part was to have been shared between Miss Bussell, Viviana Durante, Sylvie Guillem (who will dance opposite her Paris Opera partner, Laurent Hillaire) and Allynai Asymuratova. Instead Miss Durante, who opens the 22-performance season tonight, will fulfil Miss Bussell's duties.

in a ballet which requires him to perform an unusual number of lifts.

"Sir Kenneth was very upset," the spokeswoman said. "They had worked very hard together and Darcy was almost there, but during final rehearsals he realised that it was not right."

Miss Bussell, for whom Sir Kenneth created the three-act ballet *Prince of the Pagodas* which had its world premiere at Covent Garden last year and effectively made her a star, remains a principal dancer with Royal Ballet. The partnership with Mukhamedov is to be renewed with a new Kenneth MacMillan ballet, *Winter Dreams*, opening on February 18. Miss

Miller meets Mandela



In the Saturday Review America's greatest living playwright talks to the symbol of South African resistance

Bad spelling penalised

Children will lose marks for poor spelling in all this summer's GCSE examinations, Kenneth Clarke, the education secretary, announced yesterday. Previously, examiners have accepted inaccurate spelling, bad writing and incorrect grammar in all papers except English. Mr Clarke has now ruled that up to 5 per cent of a pupil's marks may be deducted in all subjects for poor spelling. Page 22

Canal tragedy

A verdict of accidental death was recorded on three children who drowned when their mother stumbled on the edge of a canal lock in Reading, Berkshire, while she was taking them for a walk. Page 3

Chelsea fined

Chelsea football club was fined a record £105,000 by the Football League for making illegal payments to three of its players. Page 23

Pits to close

More pits will close as British Coal Corporation battles to cut costs and stem a threatened flood of imports ahead of privatisation, independent figures show. Page 30

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Half of the British public back action

By ROBIN OAKLEY, POLITICAL EDITOR

HALF the British public believes that the multinational forces should invade Kuwait immediately after the United Nations deadline of January 15 has passed. And 58 per cent believe that the allies should remove President Saddam Hussein from power, even if he pulls his troops out of Kuwait at the last minute.

A new Mori poll, conducted on Wednesday and Thursday for the Free Kuwait campaign, found strong backing for the government's handling of the Gulf confrontation. In contrast to some European countries where public opinion has turned against the use of force, 75 per cent of Britons back

military action and only 18 per cent oppose it.

The government's efforts earn a high satisfaction rating and John Major's uncompromising line on his Gulf tour has been returned enthusiastically by the Conservatives. Their support measured at 44 per cent to 42 per cent for Labour, and 11 per cent for the Liberals.

More backing: An ITN/Harris poll for News At Ten found that 56 per cent of the British public supported military action. But 38 per cent believed that sanctions should be given several more months to succeed.

Full report, page 7

Ballet star Bussell misses big role by inches

By SIMON TAIT ARTS CORRESPONDENT

DARCEY Bussell, the great hope of British ballet, has been dismissed from Sir Kenneth MacMillan's Royal Opera House production of *Manon* just before tonight's Covent Garden opening - because she is too tall.

"On Thursday night it was decided that Darcey was not physically right for the role," the Royal Ballet said last night. "She was desperately disappointed but agreed with Sir Kenneth that the decision was right."

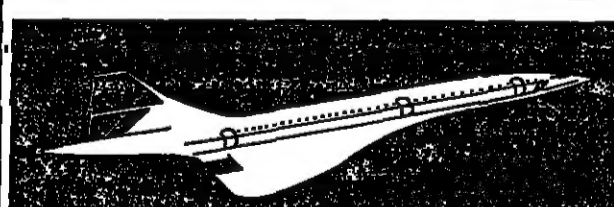
The portrayal was to have been Miss Bussell's debut in the role and she has been heavily publicised on behalf of



Bussell (right) and Durante, who will replace her

the production with national newspaper interviews. Her pairing with Irek Mukhamedov, formerly of the Bolshoi, has been compared with Dame Margot Fonteyn's mould-breaking partnership with Rudolph Nureyev in the

1960s and 70s. Although Miss Bussell, aged 21, at 5ft 7in is two to three inches shorter than her partner, on points she stretches to 6 feet 2 inches, four inches taller than Mukhamedov. She becomes too unwieldy for her partner



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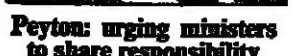
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Decision deferred in bomb plot plea



The staff are in uniforms and tidy. The shops and catering are better."

The zoo hopes that Michael Heseltine, the environment secretary and a former member of the board of Zoo Operations, will treat the zoo with sensitivity. Lord Peyton said: "We hope in six months the core group will produce a plan. I am anxious that the government should at least sit down and talk as though the problem was shared."

He called on the government to accept the implications of its custodianship of Regent's Park and of its role as the ultimate planning and listed buildings authority.

The Court of Appeal yesterday deferred its decision over the appeal by Gilbert McNamee, a convicted IRA bombmaker.

Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, sitting with Mr Justice Kennedy, was told that lawyers for the physics graduate, aged 30, wanted to advance further legal argument, although the appeal hearing ended on December 19 and judgment was due yesterday.

McNamee, from Crossmaglen, Co Armagh, is serving a 25-year sentence for plotting to cause explosions. He was jailed at the Central Criminal Court in 1981.

Richard Ferguson QC, for McNamee, is abroad and the third judge who heard his appeal against conviction. Mr Justice Judge, was absent from the hearing yesterday through family illness. Lord Lane adjourned the hearing provisionally until January 18 to complete legal argument.

By NICHOLAS WOOD, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

traditional blend of academic subjects might be provided by one of the grammar maintained schools funded directly by the government or by one of the existing county comprehensive schools. Children would transfer to their chosen school at the age of 11 and for their first three years would follow the 10-subject national curriculum.

At the age of 14, the range of subjects offered would narrow and become more specialised. That process would intensify after the age of 16. Pupils who changed their minds about the direction they wanted to take would be free to switch to another school at 14 and 16.

The proposals are to be put to the Tory manifesto group on education being chaired by Kenneth Clarke, the education secretary. One source said: "These developments are being targeted on the 14-19 group and the intention is that they will meet the big problems caused by the existing system. A large number of alienated pupils are playing truant between 14 to 16. Selection will improve their motivation and so contribute to higher attainment at 16 and a higher staying-on rate at school after 16."

James Pawsey, chairman of the backbench Tory education committee and member of the manifesto group, which is to meet soon, said he believed it was time to admit that in many cases the comprehensive experiment had not delivered the goods.

The plans will be attacked as a

By QUENTIN COWDRY
HOME AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

MINISTERS are considering proposals for private companies to run secure remand units for juveniles, to the alarm of social workers, probation officers and penal reformers.

The proposal has further delayed publication of a government consultation paper outlining alternatives to prison for juveniles of 17 and under. The paper, first mentioned last February, has already been held up by inter-departmental disagreements.

Ministers, however, still want to include the new arrangements in the criminal justice bill, now in committee stage in the Commons. Until a few weeks ago it had seemed that the Home Office and the health department were close to agreeing that the solution to the problem of young people under 17 being remanded to adult prisons lay in expanding the network of council-run juvenile units.

Now, however, the Home Office has proposed that some, perhaps all, of the planned new units should be privately-managed. The 37 existing units are run by council social services departments, overseen by the Whitehall-based social services inspectorate.

If the privatisation idea features in the paper, there will be fierce protests from social workers, probation officers and penal reformers. They argue that care standards would fall if the profit motive has influenced the system. The health department is also understood to be uneasy.

Harry Fletcher, chief executive and secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "The kind of juveniles who end up in custody need the most intensive, specialised help. We don't believe commercial interests are best placed to provide it".

It is understood that the paper will recommend the provision of 12 new ten-bed units and new powers so that magistrates can insist that certain juveniles remanded into the care of local authorities are held securely.



By RONALD FAUX

JAMES Sharples, chief constable of Merseyside, denied yesterday that a smear campaign had been mounted against Alison Halford, his assistant chief constable, who has accused him at an industrial tribunal of sexual discrimination.

Breaking his silence over the tribunal hearing, Mr Sharples said that the misleading publicity surrounding it had become intolerable.

In a statement issued through Kevin Fletcher, his solicitor, Mr Sharples said that evidence relating to the allegations of a smear campaign had been placed before the attorney-general, the Liverpool industrial tribunal panel which is hearing Miss Halford's case against Mr Sharples, the home secretary, Northamptonshire police authority and Sir Philip Myers, north-west inspector of constabulary.

Miss Halford, aged 50, Britain's most senior policewoman, claims that she was turned down for a number of promotions because she is a woman. She is suspended from duty on full pay while allegations of misconduct against



officer in the Merseyside police acting on his behalf, and with his knowledge, had conducted a "kangaroo" trial against Mr. Halford. The original statements omitted the words "and with his knowledge" but an amendment was issued later.

The statement said that the chief constable had not been responsible for the great many stories in the press and on television and radio. It went on: "It may be that an inference could be drawn that a document mentioned in a *Sunday Times* article on December 16, 1990, was leaked by the chief constable or by someone on his behalf with his knowledge. That led to widespread allegations of a smear campaign. We know that to be completely untrue.

"We have evidence... which we believe reveals the true source of the leak. We obtained our evidence before the attorney general and the chairman of the industrial tribunal and we are considering whether or not contempt proceedings are necessary. The chief constable of Merseyside now hopes that this case, which he will contest vigorously, can now

ceed without further distraction." In her first complaint, Miss Halford accused Mr Sharples of neglect of duty in failing to investigate the apparent police sources of a Sunday newspaper report which first disclosed details of her alleged misconduct. She is said to have swum in a businessman's pool in her underwear while demonstrating life saving techniques with a junior officer when she was officially on duty.

In her second complaint, disclosed on Thursday by the Merseyside police authority, she accused unnamed officers of leaking the address of her Spanish holiday home to the media. Reporters followed her to Spain when she took her Christmas break after her suspension. Other allegations arose after the *Sunday Times* mentioned a "secret file" written by Mr Sharples which referred to rumours that Miss Halford had formed an "improper relationship" with a woman.

A spokesman for the tribunal panel said that yesterday's session would be held in private for production of documents. The hearing is expected to open in suburban Thurday.

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

THE government moved yesterday to deflect mounting opposition from the legal profession by proposing that lawyers fear will dissuade people from appealing against a planning decision at a public enquiry or hearing.

The Bar, the Law Society and the all-party law reform group Justice have joined forces to fight the proposals in clause 24 of the planning and compensation bill, which starts its committee stage in the Lords next week.

They are concerned that people will be deterred from exercising their right to have their appeal heard publicly because of a new proposed power enabling the environment secretary or an inspector to award the costs of the enquiry against them.

Tim Yeo, environment minister, who said yesterday that he would consult various bodies on the proposals, also issued a statement on the government's position. "We are concerned with a comparatively small number of appeals which really do not justify the formality and expense of an enquiry or a hearing," he said.

"We think it is right that, when somebody unreasonably maintains that an enquiry or hearing must take place, he should have to bear the financial consequences of his request for other parties in those appeal proceedings."

The new power meant that someone who thought the written representations procedure unsatisfactory for his appeal would have to assess the risk of costs

being awarded against him for having been unreasonable in asking for an enquiry. Mr Yeo added that it should not be interpreted as an attempt to deter anyone from requesting an enquiry.

The paper outlines factors that would be relevant in assessing "unreasonableness" and what safeguards would be built into this process. Under the clause, where an inspector decides retrospectively that the appellant insisted unreasonably on being heard at a public local enquiry instead of submitting his appeal under the written procedure, the inspector can order against him or her.

Demolition

By CHRISTOPHER WARMAN

PROPERTY developers may have to obtain planning permission before they demolish buildings as a result of a High Court decision yesterday.

Deputy High Court judge David Widdicombe, QC held that demolition, if it was an operation that a builder would normally carry out, constituted development which needed planning consent. Until now, permission has normally been required only to demolish a listed building.

The judge allowed an appeal by Cambridge city council in its attempt to stop a developer converting a site with two houses into a car park. He said a planning inspector erred in law by ruling

David Keene, QC, vice-chairman of the Local Government and Planning Bar Association, said that the clause seemed to be aimed at deterring people from exercising their right to an oral hearing.

"We take the view that an oral hearing is of the greatest importance to appellants. Many appellants find it difficult to express themselves effectively in writing and they ought to have the entitlement to speak directly to the inspector at an enquiry because he is the person who is usually the decision-maker."

Letters, page 11

challenged

PROPERTY CORRESPONDENT

that demolition could go ahead, and remitted the case to the environment secretary for reconsideration.

The houses in Milton Road, Cambridge were close to an office complex put up by Milton Park Investments, which bought the houses and used them as a site office, then began to demolish them and use the space as a car park. Cambridge city council ordered the company to stop the demolition and restore the houses, saying it did not have planning permission. The firm appealed and an environment department inspector quashed the notices. The judge granted leave to appeal against his decision.

By DOUGLAS BROOM, LOCAL GOVERNMENT CORRESPONDENT

POLICE authorities are to be exempted from charge capping to ensure that officers remain on the beat despite stringent spending limits proposed by ministers. Ministers, the Home Office minister of state, said that the five metropolitan police authorities outside London would not be penalised for overspending to maintain manning levels. His assurance was given in a letter to the Labour-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA).

The letter was released after the Greater Manchester Police Authority issued a warning that it would have to dismiss 100 officers and cut 70 civilian posts to stay within what it described as "inadequate" government spending targets. Lord Ferrers said that capping was not an automatic process and that Kenneth Baker, the home secretary, would not allow police authorities to be capped simply for trying to maintain staff levels.

The five metropolitan police authorities took over responsibility for policing Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, the West Midlands and West Yorkshire when the metropolitan counties were abolished in 1986. Since then they have operated as independent single-purpose local authorities and have become subject to capping under the same procedures that are used to control local council spending.

All five had said that they might face capping from April and the 6,988-strong Greater Manchester

force said that the cash limits set by Michael Heseltine, the environment secretary, would not be enough to maintain spending at this year's level.

Lord Fere's letter said: "In the case of single service police authorities the home secretary's view of their expenditure needs, and, in particular, the maintenance of manpower at the level which he has approved, would be crucial factors in the capping decision."

George Bundred, chairman of the AMA police committee, said last night: "On the face of it this is very good news. It should mean that we will be able to save some of the 1,700 officers which chief constables have predicted will be taken off the streets."

Last October the government announced that any council which spent 9 per cent more than in the current financial year or exceeded its spending target by more than 12.5 per cent from April would be automatically capped. The environment secretary said last night it had never stated that capping would be automatic.

Local authority leaders yesterday challenged the government's commitment to carry out a thorough review of local government and the poll tax by tabling their own six-point agenda for change. Responding to an invitation by Mr Heseltine to suggest a programme, the three main local government bodies said the constitutional role of councils should be clarified.

Further trials of a new whooping cough vaccine are planned after research which appears to have found that the vaccine has fewer side effects than earlier versions. The trials will assess the vaccine's protective effect, according to a report by British researchers in *The Lancet*. The vaccine has been developed by the centre for applied microbiology and research at Porton Down, Wiltshire.

Tunnel prosecution

The five British construction companies building the Channel tunnel are to be prosecuted for criminal negligence after the death last May of a construction worker, the Health and Safety Executive announced yesterday. The companies face a maximum fine of £2,000 each if convicted by a magistrates' court, and an unlimited fine if the case is committed to crown court.

CORRECTION



We regret that the photograph accompanying our report on bids for the commercial "non-pop" radio franchise (Jan 9) was of David Astor, former editor of the *Observer*, not of the David Astor who is chairman of Classic FM, whose photograph appears above.

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هكذا من الأصل

Accidental death verdict on children drowned in canal

By PETER VICTOR

A VERDICT of accidental death was recorded yesterday on three children who drowned when their mother took them for a walk by a canal in Reading two days after Christmas.

Charles Hoile, the West Berkshire coroner, was told at a hearing in Newbury that Suzanne Vazquez stumbled forward on the edge of Southcote Lock as she watched her children play. Craig, her seven-month-old son and daughter Claire, aged six, and Carla, aged eight, fell into the lock on the Kennet and Avon canal and died.

Mrs Vazquez, aged 30, of Tilehurst, Reading, said that Carlos, her husband, had left home at 6am to go fishing. She had taken the children for a walk stopping to rest at a bench near the lock. She said that Carla began playing near the water's edge and Claire went to join her so she moved closer to supervise them. "I knelt down behind them. I had the baby on my knee."

When she got up to leave her leg was numb and it gave

way. "As I stood up they [Carla and Claire] fell in the water. I fell forward and reached out to grab them, and the baby fell. It all happened so fast." None of the children could swim and as she was a poor swimmer she did not jump in after them, she said.

"I froze and panicked and I started screaming for someone to help get them out." She ran down the canal path to where Philip Ludford was fishing. He managed to get out one of the girls but she was dead.

The coroner said that Mrs Vazquez had been treated for post-natal depression in 1985 and 1987. She had also been treated from last October. Philip Simmonds, the family doctor, said in a written submission that Mrs Vazquez had been prescribed an anti-depressant drug but had come off it and was recovering when the accident happened.

"There was nothing in her symptoms which suggested to me in any way that she would neglect or harm her children," he said.

Detective Inspector John

Ireland of Thames Valley police said that investigations had confirmed Mrs Vazquez's version of events.

The bodies were examined by Dr Freddie Patel, a pathologist at Guy's hospital, central London. He said the children died as "a result of immersion in water. There were minor injuries consistent with falling into water. There were no injuries consistent with deliberate immersion."

John Weston, a British Waterway Board operations manager, said that the board put a high priority on safety and was to see if improvements were needed at the lock where the children drowned.

Mr Hoile, the coroner, said it was clear from Mrs Vazquez's evidence that the deaths had been the result of a tragic accident. He said that it had been for her a moment of extreme panic. "One could see that hysteria took over almost immediately, one could see from the state of her clothes that she did what she could from the bank in a kneeling position."

He commended the police on their sensitive handling of the case. He concluded: "My sympathy goes out to this family as does the sympathy of right-minded people." In each case he said his verdict was accidental death.

An inquest opened yesterday into the deaths of a man and his three daughters in a blazing car at Cliftonville, Margate, Kent, on January 4. Evidence of identification was given on John Roy, aged 36, who was on compassionate leave from Aldington prison, near Ashford, and his children Louise, aged seven, Lois, aged four, and 18-month-old Leigh. The inquest was adjourned.



Suzanne and Carlos Vazquez arriving at the inquest into the deaths of their children yesterday

Tube error seen after baby died

JEMMA Fenton, a baby aged 11 months, was blown up like a balloon as a hospital emergency team fought to save her life, the Central Criminal Court was told yesterday.

Night sister Barbara Leonard, part of the team which tried to save the baby, said a wrongly connected oxygen tube was noticed only after she died. Ms Leonard said she questioned the two nurses on duty in the ward at Oldchurch Hospital, Romford, Essex, — Florence McKenley and Stephanie Jordan — but both denied touching any tubing. Mrs McKenley, aged 48, of Woodford, Essex, is accused of causing Jemma's death by wrongly connecting the oxygen tube to an intravenous drip in her arm. She denies manslaughter.

Registrar Joan Hoare said Jemma was bloated when the resuscitation team arrived at her cot. She denied suggestions by Robin Stewart, QC, for Mrs McKenley, that Jemma had become bloated during the resuscitation attempts.

The trial continues on Monday.

Skippers to defy EC fishing rules

TRAWLER skippers decided yesterday to risk arrest at sea by ignoring European Commission regulations forcing them to tie up in port for eight consecutive days each month (Peter Davenport writes). The rules, intended to conserve dwindling North Sea stocks of cod and haddock, come into effect on February 1.

About 70 boats in England and Wales are affected, mainly in northeast ports. Their skippers say the regulations will be ineffective and will endanger lives as boats will be forced by economic pressure to put to sea in bad weather and stay at sea longer than is safe.

The decision to ignore the rules was taken at a meeting of trawlermen in Whitby organised by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, representing 4,000 fishermen in England and Wales. Richard Banks, the federation's chief executive, said that it would fight the case of any arrested skipper and pursue the action to the European Court.

He said that fishermen breaching the common licensing regulations face fines of up to £50,000. The eight-day rule

could, to a degree, be offset by fishermen working longer hours and going to sea at weekends but they would be forced to stay out at sea in bad conditions when they should not be there.

The legislation applies to boats which between January 1989 and last June caught over 100 tonnes, more than 40 per cent of which was cod and haddock. The worst affected ports would be Grimsby, Whitby and Bridlington.

In an attempt to force the hand of the government, all boats intending to flout the eight-day rule will put to sea with nets increased from a mesh size of 90mm to 110mm, a move which, the fishermen say, will do more to conserve stocks than the new rules. It will cost each boat £4,000 to change nets and the federation believes the move will make it morally difficult for the government to order the arrest and prosecution of its members.

The meeting yesterday also decided that the federation should challenge the legality of the legislation and the common fisheries policy at the European Court of Justice.

Trawlermen land £64,000 net gain

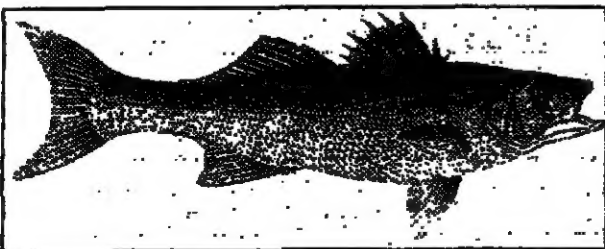
By MICHAEL HORNBSY
AGRICULTURE
CORRESPONDENT

RICHARD Newman had an unexpected Christmas present. On December 19 he put to sea from Looe harbour in Cornwall with his brother Chris to pair trawl for sea bass, one of the most highly prized fish in the sea.

In pair trawling, two vessels sailing about a quarter of a mile apart drag a single net between them, a much bigger one than either could handle alone.

Finding bass can be a hit-or-miss business and at first it seemed that they were going to be out of luck. Mr Newman said: "We had turned for home and it was only when we began to haul the net in that we realised we had a major catch of bass. I wish I knew how we found them. I would be back there tomorrow."

The haul weighed 9.5 tons and at £3 a lb fetched £64,000 at auction the next day, the largest catch ever recorded in the Looe market. In total, bass landings netted local fishermen £850,000 last year. Much of the catch was exported to France, where *loup de mer* is a prized table fish. Bass is also in increasing



Prized bass, which can tip the scales at £7.50 a lb

demand in London restaurants and is fetching £7.50 a lb in Billingsgate market, compared with £2 a lb for salmon. The total value of the bass catch to fishermen is about £5 million a year, making it one of the most important commercial fisheries.

While the commercial trawlermen have been celebrating their good fortune, rod-and-line anglers who have long admired the sporting qualities of the hard-fighting bass are worried that such big hauls could deplete stocks to dangerously low levels.

Bryan Meade, conservation officer of the Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers, said: "There will be too few fish left to reproduce to keep stocks healthy in the future and there must be some sort of catch quota." Dave Cooling, treasurer of the Bass

Anglers Sportsfishing Society, said it was wrong to allow trawlers "to prey on the fish just when the overwintering shoals are about to start breeding".

Adult bass are powerful and can grow to well over 19lb. They spend the summer inshore in the southern North Sea, Irish Sea and off the Welsh coast, feeding on crabs, shrimp and other small fish. From December they move south to the western reaches of the English Channel to gather in shoals in warmer offshore waters before spawning in March and April.

Scientists at the agriculture ministry's fisheries research directorate in Lowestoft say the anglers' fears are exaggerated. Mike Pawson, a stock management specialist at the directorate, said: "We believe that if we can protect the juvenile

fish, the adult stock is capable of looking after itself. The evidence for a crisis in the fishery is not there."

After spawning, the eggs drift inshore, hatching within five days into larvae that grow over the next 30-40 days to a length of 12mm. Around June they move into river estuaries, harbours and the warm water outfalls of power stations. The fish grow slowly in these so-called "nursery areas" from which they eventually join the adult stock, the males at the age of four and the females at around six years.

To protect the fish during this long growth period, the government last June introduced measures banning fishing for bass for all or part of the year in 34 nursery areas round the southern and western coasts of England. It is also illegal to catch bass that are less than 36cm in length.

The scientists do not believe that extra measures, such as quotas, are needed yet. They say that French fishermen have been exploiting the overwintering shoals on their side of the Channel much more heavily than the British since the mid-1970s without endangering stock levels.

Survivors tell inquest of rescue from sea

TWO Polish men, the only survivors of a crew of 12 from a tanker which capsized off Anglesey, north Wales, on Sunday morning, described yesterday how they escaped death.

They were speaking at an inquest in Bangor on four men — two Poles and two from Cape Verde Islands — whose bodies are the only ones to have been recovered.

Krzysztof Gapiński, aged 38, boss of the 1,800-tonne *Kimya*, described being hurled into the water from the bridge where the crew was in life-jackets. He had been with a group of six men in the water who were battered by huge waves. "But as time went on voices faded away and then there was no contact with anybody," he told coroner Dewi Pritchard-Jones.

Mr Gapiński said he had been saved because the light from his waterproof torch was spotted by a helicopter crew who eventually winched him to safety.

Asked by the coroner why he thought the *Kimya* had capsized, he said: "I presume that there was too much water going on to the port side." The boss said that the crew had spent two hours using pumps to try to adjust the ballast.

Third engineer Bogdan Szpilman, aged 28, said he owed his life to the windsurfing wet suit which he was wearing, a lifejacket and a light from emergency equipment. He said that he had no idea why the tanker started to list and turn over.

Mr Szpilman said he had been in the water for 40 minutes with some of the crew. "Very strong and high winds separated us. When I was again on the surface I didn't see anybody."

The inquest, which was adjourned after three hours, was told by a pathologist that the four men had died from drowning associated with hypothermia.

Crashes and flood alerts but weather prospects improve

By KERRY GILL AND CRAIG SETON

AFTER a week of being battered by gales, lashed with rain and covered by snow most parts of Britain will this weekend be brighter but colder.

The London Weather Centre has forecast that high pressure from the west will bring brighter but colder weather, although there will still be scattered showers in many northern and western areas, heavy at times, with snowfalls, particularly over Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England. The south will be cloudy with showers but all areas should become brighter and drier on Sunday and Monday.

As large areas of Kent suffer floods after heavy downpours, two water authorities said they want to extend drought orders. Southern Water and Mid Kent Water say that they must keep hosepipe bans into the summer.

In Kent yesterday a man died after being blown off a hotel roof in Hollingbourne, near Maidstone. He had been working on the roof with two

other men. A red alert warning of the possible flooding of homes close to the Severn between Worcester and Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire was issued yesterday as the river rose to a peak about 14ft above its normal level.

Thousands of acres of farmland and some roads and properties have been flooded in the Severn valley between Shrewsbury in Shropshire and Tewkesbury after two days of heavy rain.

The National Rivers Authority hopes that the level will begin to recede over the weekend. The area where homes were most at risk yesterday was at Upton on Severn, south of Worcester, but flooding was not expected to be as serious as last winter, when the river broke its banks.

A sudden hailstorm is believed to have caused a top-of-pile-up yesterday on the A27 between Chichester, Sussex and Emsworth, Hampshire. Cars landed on their roofs and others careered off the carriageways, but police said

that nobody was killed or badly injured.

In Scotland a skier was found dead late yesterday after he and his companion plunged several hundred feet down a mountain on the edge of Rannoch Moor in the Western Highlands on Thursday. Andy Ravenhill, aged 29, of Toorlundy near Fort William, spent an hour vainly trying to revive his fellow skier, Martin O'Connell, aged 30, of Callington, Cornwall.

Mr Ravenhill, who had struggled four miles through drifting snow to raise the alarm, was taken off by RAF helicopter yesterday, suffering from whiplash injuries and strained knee ligaments. A mountain rescue team is searching for the dead man in avalanche conditions.

The helicopter pilot, Flight Lieutenant Robin Sladden, said when he tried on Thursday night to rescue the injured man "the snow caused us so many problems we had to turn back". He made a successful pick-up yesterday after landing the rescue team.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

The spectre of Stalin

"No issue cleaves Soviet society today the way Stalinism does. Half a century after the purges and the mass murders, Stalinism is still an open wound. It defines the political spectrum. It lies at the heart of the country's struggle to recover its soul — a struggle that reaches deep into the personal lives of almost every adult over 40, testing the beliefs of a lifetime."

Soviet expert Hedrick Smith, in *The Sunday Times* tomorrow.

Jeremy Irons

"Perhaps Irons was an unlikely actor to portray a Danish aristocrat, to adjust the perfect English accent so that it contained the necessary overlay of European. But he has carried it off with considerable success."

Profile, in *The Sunday Times* tomorrow.

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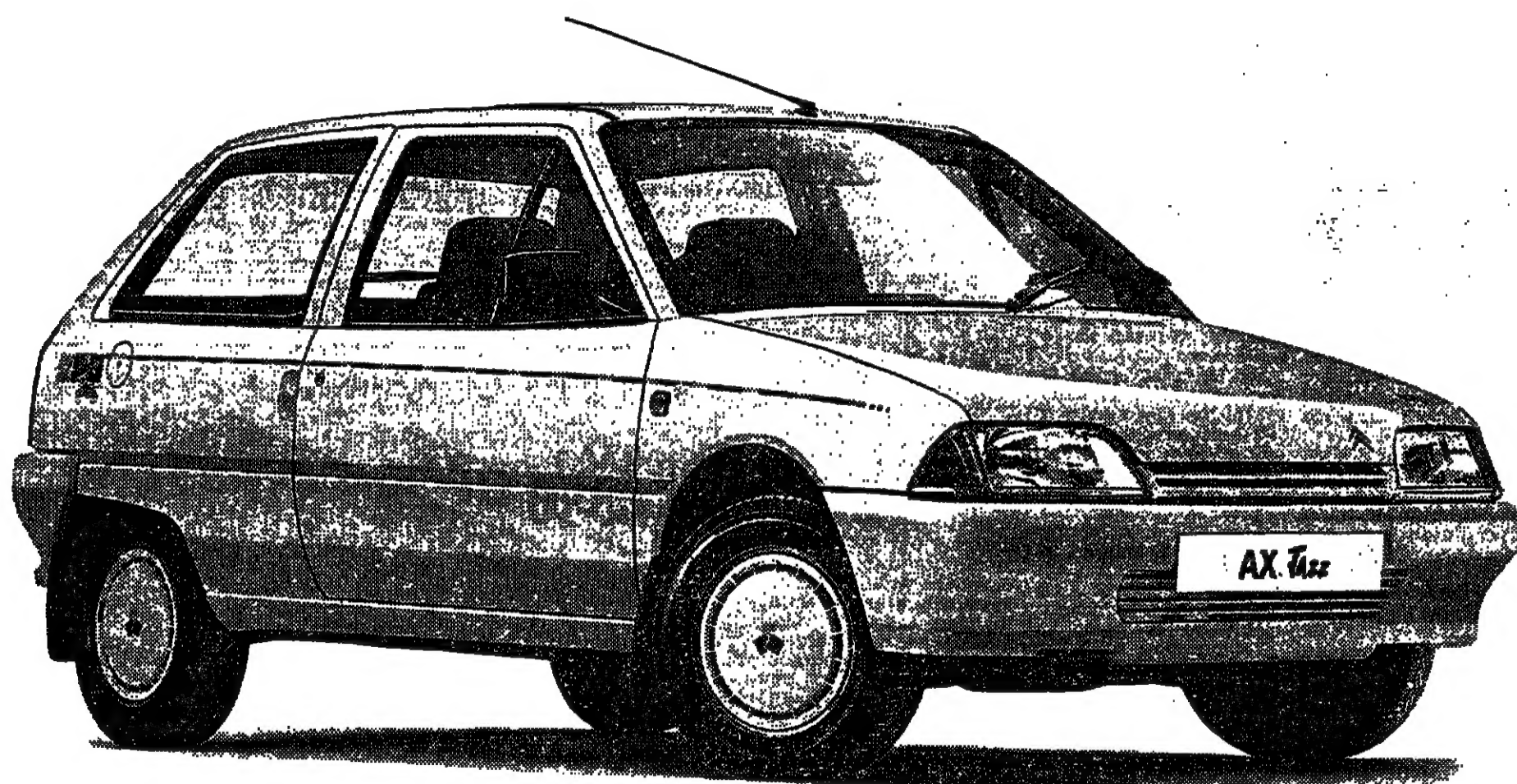
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Rib-ticklers in the poll tax queue

By DOUGLAS BROOM, LOCAL GOVERNMENT CORRESPONDENT

RESIDENTS of Rotherham, South Yorkshire, are being given something to laugh about as they queue to pay the poll tax. The Labour-controlled council has published a joke book which it has put on sale at community charge collection counters.

For 50p charge payers can buy 25 pages of jokes, cartoons and howlers from official council documents, including letters received by staff at the town's civic centre.

Among the gems from housing department files is a letter from a council tenant, saying: "Will you please send someone to mend our broken path. Yesterday my wife tripped and fell and now she is pregnant."

Another troubled tenant wrote: "Our kitchen floor is very damp. We have two children and would like a third, so will you please send someone to do something about it." A further

letter said: "Will you please tell me when our repairs are going to be done as my wife is about to become an expectant mother?"

A worried tenant wrote: "I request your permission to remove my drawers in the kitchen" while another complained: "I am still having trouble with smoke in my built-in drawers."

The book reports a letter from a tenant who asked: "My toilet seat is cracked, where do I stand?" His problems were as nought compared to the one who wrote: "This is to let you know that our lavatory seat is broken and we cannot get BBC2."

Perhaps the most surreal letter came from a tenant who said: "I am writing on behalf of my sink which is running away from the wall." The joke book is being sold in aid of the local authorities' charity, Council Aid, which modelled itself on the Live Aid and Band Aid campaigns. Three thousand

copies of the joke book have been printed for sale in libraries, sports centres and catering outlets and they can also be bought at the reception desk in the poll tax collection department. The aim is to raise £1,500 towards the £50,000 target set for Council Aid's project to provide irrigation for Mozambique farmers.

Sheila Halse, the council's public relations officer, initiated the joke book as a way of training staff to use new desktop publishing equipment. She said: "It is based on the college rag magazine format and proved a very good way of getting to know how to use the equipment. We hope it will give people a good laugh."

But what about the advisability of selling it to poll tax payers as they part with community charge payments? "We think it will bring a smile to anyone's face, however depressed they are," she said.



Rescue operation: Mr Orde-Powlett at Bolton Castle after the grant was announced

£620,000 heritage grant for medieval castle facelift

By PETER DAVENPORT

ENGLISH Heritage yesterday announced its largest single grant for the repair of an ancient monument when it gave details of financial aid for a long-term programme of work on Bolton Castle in Wensleydale, north Yorkshire, where Mary, Queen of Scots was once jailed.

Built between 1360 and 1399 for Richard, Lord Scrope, a battle companion of the Black Prince and Chancellor of England under Richard II, Bolton is regarded as one of the best preserved 14th century castles.

It stands five miles west of Leyburn in the Yorkshire Dales, stark and rectangular with a central courtyard and four ranges linking huge corner towers. The castle has been a silent witness to many of the important events of English history. In 1645, during the Civil War, it withstood

a siege by parliamentary forces and later was among a number of Yorkshire castles that were ordered to be dismantled because of their continued strategic importance.

Despite its travails and continued use throughout the centuries, English Heritage says the medieval character of the castle is remarkably unchanged. By the mid-1980s however it became clear that the fabric of the castle was suffering serious decay and repairs were necessary.

A three-year programme of work costing £1.5 million is scheduled, with the first phase due for completion by April. The grant of £620,000 announced by English Heritage yesterday represents about 90 per cent of the total cost of phase one and includes £80,000 for archaeological recording and advice from Lancaster university.

The present owner is Harry Orde-Powlett, son of Lord

Bolton and descended from the Scrope family. He hopes to improve the attractions at the castle, especially the main apartments and bedchambers. Bolton is open to the public between March and November and attracts 70,000 visitors annually.

The National Trust announced officially yesterday that it had purchased A La Ronde, the extraordinary 16-sided house at Exmouth, Devon, and Northern Ireland's most famous mountain, the 2,796ft Slieve Donard (Christopher Warman writes).

A La Ronde was built in 1798 by spinster cousins Jane and Mary Parmenter and modelled on a sixth century Byzantine basilica at Ravenna they had seen on an European tour.

Slieve Donard overlooks the seaside resort of Newcastle, Co Down, and was sold for "substantial" sum by the Annesley family.

Early ban urged for pig rearing methods

By MICHAEL HORNSBY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

THE most extreme forms of confined pig rearing, which the government says farmers may use until the end of 1998, should be phased out faster, animal welfare campaigners say.

Sir Richard Body, Conservative MP for Holland with Boston, said yesterday that he would press ahead with his private member's bill, which would ban all such systems after five years and prohibit immediately the installation of new units.

In what appeared to have been timed as a pre-emptive move, John Gummer, the agriculture minister, announced on Thursday that the government was also planning to ban new units but would give farmers eight years to phase out existing ones. Mr Gummer said that his proposal was a big step forward for animal welfare.

Sir Richard, a former pig farmer, said it was gratifying that the government at last saw the necessity of bringing these dreadful methods to an end. "I will not be withdrawing my bill, however, as a five-year phasing-out period is preferable and it will provide an opportunity for the subject to be debated." He is seeking a second reading of his bill, which has unofficial Labour party support, on January 25.

At present, half of Britain's estimated 400,000 sows are kept in stalls. In a dry stall, a sow is confined between metal bars on a concrete and slat floor, unable to turn round for most of its 16½-week pregnancy. In a tether stall, the animal is tied to the floor.

The National Farmers' Union said that it would prefer a ten-year phasing-out period as farmers would face heavy costs in switching to alternative systems. The union also wanted the same regulations to apply throughout the European Community so that British producers would not be competing at a disadvantage.

Alternatives to the stall system include less confined indoor housing and free-range outdoor rearing. The latter accounts for no more than 10 per cent of British pork and bacon production. Less intensive systems would mean lower output and probably higher prices in the shops.

Compassion in World Farming, the animal rights group, welcomed Mr Gummer's announcement but said the hundreds of thousands of sows incarcerated in stalls and tethers could not wait eight years and urged MPs to support Sir Richard's bill.

Leading article, page 11

Dog enthusiasts flock to new venue

THE Crufts dog show, held for the first time at the Birmingham National Exhibition Centre, has attracted a record 37,000 visitors in the first two days and the organisers hope that 100,000 people will have attended by the end of the four-day event.

The organisers said yesterday: "Our daily attendance figures are above those at Earls Court. The NEC is obviously a very popular venue and we are extremely pleased that figures are so high."

Results from yesterday:

Hounds
Best of Breeds, Afghan Ch. Sashikan Me and My Girl (Mr and Mrs P D Savage, Watford, Herts). Basset Fauve de Bretagne Varon Hermage at Kocafas (Mrs K Lucas, Crawley Down, W Sussex). Beagle Ch. Julemark Hotspur By Nodlaw (Mrs Waiden & Dundas, Parnington, Hants). Borzoi Ch. Raa Ravell (Mr and Mrs R E Heap, Colne, Lancs). Dachshund (long haired) Ch. Swansford Arrandale (Mrs M Swann, Stafford, Staffs).

Dachshund (miniature long haired): Windsor Wroyal Seal (R Wood, Norwich, Norfolk). Dachshund (miniature smooth haired): Ch. Ralines Mead To Measure (Mr P and Mrs F & Ms R Lockett, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton). Dachshund (miniature wire-haired): Emmet Minder Marblers (Mrs M Dance, Yardley, Birmingham). Elkhound: Highland Tasha (R Cassels, Londonderry, N Ireland). Finnish Spitz: Toveri Kuukilli (Mr and Mrs C Window, Newmarket, Suffolk). Greyhound: Ch. Royal Port (Mrs H Chapman, Wadebridge, Cornwall). Hamiltonstovares: Dr. Danse of Tedandi (Mrs D Cork, Atton, Hants). Bull Terrier: Ch. Jazzer Bahya (Mr and Mrs K D Allen, Hummingdon, Cambs). Skye Terrier: Ch. Mousa (Mrs M Kestle, Ashford, Middlesex). Whippet: Ch. Tregreen Tornado (Mrs M Blanks, Basildon, Essex). Fox Terrier (Wire): Boudace Gong for Gold (KCC) (Mr M O'Donoghue, Dundalk, Co Louth).

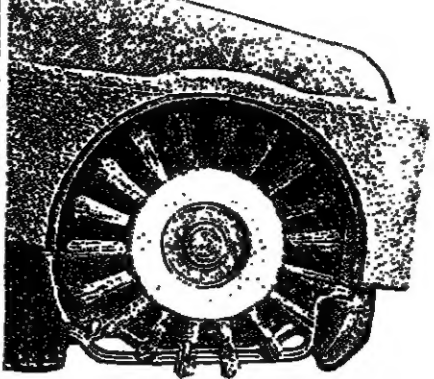
Ireland). Basenjis: Ch. Tenki Tambeau (Mrs E Grayson, Ashford, Kent). Boxer: Ch. Boudace (miniature smooth): Getha Floella (Mrs J Forster, Halesham, E Sussex). Doberman: Ch. Silver Sugi (Mrs L Reilly, Mark, Somerset). Basset Hound: Ch. Evening Princess of Galt (Mrs J Mosby, Morden, Surrey). Bloodhound: Ch. Robinswood Thurlow (C Avery, Guildford, Surrey).

Terriers
Austrian: Ch. Brimartz Castaspell (Mr and Mrs Hodgson and Mr M Murray, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs). Border: Ch. Farfoot Mrs Charity Barmum (Mr and Mrs J Taylor, Blackpool, Lancs). Ch. Megavar Masterpiece (Mr C Gardner and Mrs P Gilmour, Fife). Cairn: Ch. Larchlea Take A Chance On Me (Mrs C Templeton, Kirkcubrecht, S. Dyrce). Fox Terrier (smooth): Ch. Darlar Duxler (L. Snow, West Glam). Glen of Inak Maleville (Mrs P B. Freeman, Hird & W. Winst). Kerry Blue: Lousburgh Gipsy At Rismount (KCC) (A Walker and D Prince, Chesterfield, Derbys). Lakeland: Rayfoss Battle Chief (Mr and Mrs P B. Freeman, Newark, Notts). Manchester: Ch. Sophia Silks And Seta (Mrs L. Eva, Maidenhead, Berks). Parson Jack Russell: Ch. Bencatira Badger (P. Ross, Kewick, Cumbria). Scottish: Ch. Widemist Clara (Mr and Mrs R Taylor, Macclesfield, S. Yorks). Shetland: Ch. Topstone Domino (Mrs B. Horn, Penrith, Cumbria). Soft Coated Wheaten: Ch. Eridanus Amber Rose (Mr and Mrs R C. Macdonald, Warral, Merseyside). Staffordshire Bull Terrier: Ch. Constance Yr Man (Mr and Mrs A. Lee, Knaresborough, N Yorks). Welsh: Ch. Wasp On Bannerdown (Mrs P. Creed, Bath). West Highland White: Ch. Hawes-walton Merry-go-Round (Mrs S. Hawes, Ely, Cambs). Dandie Dinmont Terrier: Ch. Golden Slipper (Miss K. Leesley, Kettering, Northants). Bull Terrier (miniature): Ch. Barmum Barmum Wooster (Mrs J. Shaw, Ashford, Kent). Norfolk: Ch. Osamor Flintstone (O. Morris, Egham, Surrey). Norwich: Ch. Jevva Cheddar (Mr M. Phillips, Rugby, Warwick). KCIO Final Stakes (Terrier and Hound)

Perpar: Precision (Welsh Terrier). Mr P. Wilkinson, West Bromwich). Wiltshire: Ch. Wiltshire Wanderer (Whitford, Mrs J. Denby, Sutton in Ashfield, Notts). Obsequence Championships Doge: Ch. Cretiveur Choice (Mrs M. Bradley, Sutton in Ashfield, Notts). All Crufts winners will be recorded in *The Times*.

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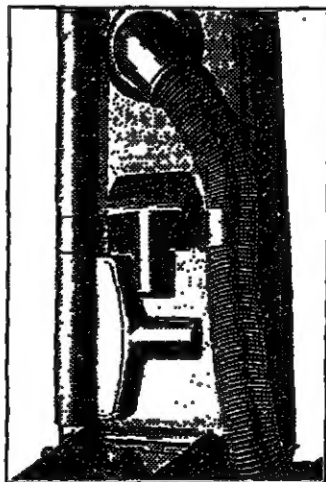
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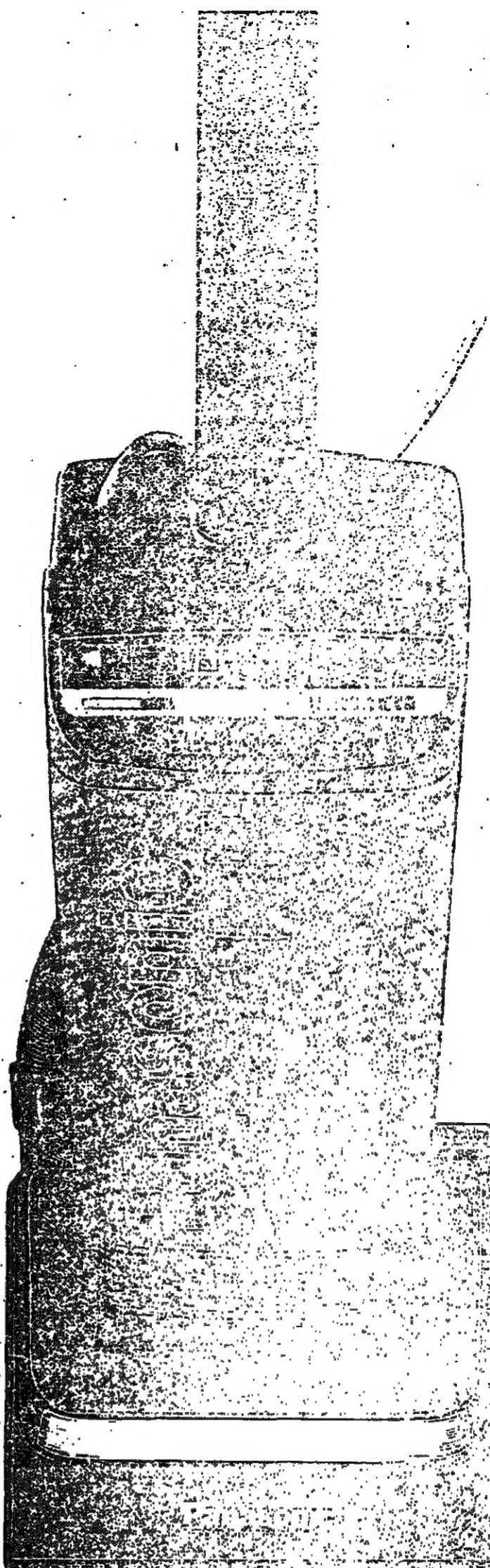
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Options narrow as fears of betrayal weigh heavily on Saddam

By EFRAIM KARSH

THE failure of the six-hour meeting in Geneva between James Baker, America's Secretary of State and Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi foreign minister, has not dashed all hopes that war can still be averted without tangible concessions to President Saddam Hussein.

Such optimism draws on Saddam's reputation as a ruthless pragmatist. He was the architect of a 1975 border demarcation agreement with Tehran, concluded under heavy military pressure, that involved humiliating concessions for Iraq. During the Iran-Iraq war, his instincts for survival drove him to approach Israel (through the American channel)

with various requests for support. Nor was Saddam deterred last August from surrendering Iraq's modest territorial gains to Iran.

The argument runs that, as Saddam is a political survivor, he would have no qualms about reversing his policy, should he think it would save his regime.

Saddam is opportunistic, but even his pragmatism has its limits. He did not invade Kuwait for reasons of power-seeking or political aggrandisement. If anything, his occupation stems from anxiety and perennial insecurity and was designed to provide vital financial resources for the economic reconstruction of Iraq, on which his political survival hinges. Contrary to the general view, Iraq did

not win the war with Iran. Rather, it emerged from the protracted conflict a crippled nation with a devastated economy. With the passage of time Saddam realised his only chance of overcoming Baghdad's economic predicament — and, thus, of political survival — lay with slashing Iraq's \$80 billion (\$42 billion) foreign debt.

Consequently he began pressuring the Gulf states, Kuwait in particular, to forgive their \$35 billion loans extended to Iraq during the war. Kuwait also came under heavy pressures to reduce its oil production, so as to push up oil prices and, at the same time, to give Baghdad an annual subsidy of about \$10 billion. When the Kuwaitis met neither of these

demands, Saddam tilted towards the military option.

Saddam, to justify his move, argued that the invasion came in response to a grave Kuwaiti conspiracy against Iraq. To outsiders, this explanation — which was, incidentally, reiterated by Mr Aziz in his meeting with Mr Baker — seems fantastic. However, in the permanently beleaguered mind of the Iraqi leader, where personal interests are nationalised and national interests personalised, the Kuwaiti indifference to "stabbing Iraq in the back with a poisoned dagger".

Against this backdrop, one can seriously question Saddam's readiness for an unconditional

withdrawal by Tuesday. Such a move would most probably damage his position beyond repair. The economic plight which pushed him to occupy Kuwait has not only remained, but has been aggravated by economic sanctions. Iraq's political system has not become kinder, the nation's patience with its leader must be running thin. Plots are certain to lurk behind each corner.

The alternative bodes equally ill. An all-out war which would destroy Iraq's military machinery and infrastructure is a recipe for Saddam's personal destruction. His only hope, therefore, lies in the collapse of the international coalition before full-scale hostilities break out. Even a small-scale

battle involving a "limited" defeat might seem better than unconditional withdrawal. Just as Nasser, the Egyptian leader in 1956, managed to turn his defeat in the Suez campaign into a political victory, so Iraq's loss of Kuwait during the course of hostilities might not be held against Saddam.

Given these considerations, there are only two options to forestall the impending war, both fraught with grave risks. The first would be to offer Saddam a face-saving formula, which he is likely to seize and to claim a victory over "world imperialism". This claim will undoubtedly be the point of view of many in the Arab world and will, consequently, entail far-reaching adverse consequences for

the future stability of the Middle East. The other is to make it unequivocally clear to the Iraqi leader that such a war would be anything but limited and would stop at nothing short of his removal.

The main risk of such brinkmanship, however, is that Saddam may believe he has more time and room for manoeuvre than he does. Given his proven record of strategic miscalculations, such a mistake is not inconceivable.

The author is lecturer at the Department of War Studies, King's College, London. His political biography of Saddam Hussein will be published by Brassey's (London) and the Free Press (New York) in May.

UNITED NATIONS

UN will suggest sending force to oversee Iraqi withdrawal

FROM GEORGE BROCK IN GENEVA

JAVIER Pérez de Cuéllar, the United Nations secretary-general, said yesterday that when he meets President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad today he would be discussing the possible role of either UN forces or observers during an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

But he made it clear that such intervention would only be contemplated in the context of a complete Iraqi withdrawal from the territory invaded last August, as demanded by resolutions of the UN Security Council. There is as yet no sign of any Iraqi evacuation.

Going into a meeting with European Community foreign

ministers, Señor Pérez de Cuéllar said that "once the withdrawal is agreed upon I think I would propose the participation of the UN forces". He added that this might involve a group of observers and perhaps military forces.

Douglas Hogg, the Foreign Office junior minister who has been deputising for Douglas Hurd, the foreign secretary, who is in the Gulf, later said that the UN secretary-general had discussed two possible kinds of UN intervention. He said that there had been talk of installing peace-keeping forces in Kuwait along the Iraqi-Kuwaiti frontier and also along the Iraqi-Saudi Arabian border. "But," he added, "it makes no kind of sense to interpose peace-keeping forces unless and until there has been total withdrawal."

He said that there is "scope" for UN observers to monitor an Iraqi withdrawal, although any monitoring would have to be very careful and arranged with great speed.

As Señor Pérez de Cuéllar left for Amman and Baghdad, he was ambiguous about what proposals he might be taking to the Iraqi leader. He said that he was "not taking any specific proposals but to listen and to be listened to". He will report back to the EC presidency on his return from Iraq — thought likely to be on Sunday.

João De Deus Pinheiro, the Portuguese foreign minister, said that the plan, to be implemented if Iraq pulls out by January 15, provides that the international community will guarantee no attack. US-led coalition forces will pull out from the Gulf region, UN observer forces will monitor withdrawal, a UN peacekeeping force will move in and a Middle East conference will convene as soon as possible.

The meeting of the EC ministers, which extended both before and after the session with the UN secretary-general, revived the tensions within the Twelve over the nuances of its position on the Gulf. The meeting confirmed the position agreed by the ministers on January 4, when they backed the principles expressed in the 12 UN resolutions. "We added nothing and we subtracted nothing," said Jacques Poos, the Luxembourg foreign minister and current president of the EC. But there remain important differences of emphasis.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the German foreign minister, said later: "The key to the Middle East peace conference is in Saddam Hussein's hands."

Mr Hogg said that the core position remained that if Iraq did not withdraw from Kuwait it would be expelled by force. If it pulled back completely, it would not be attacked.

The EC ministers did not foresee any initiatives by individual countries. "There was no question today at our meeting of a French initiative," Mr Poos said.

Memories of Congo colour peace trip

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

WHEN it was announced that Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the UN secretary-general, had made a last-minute change in his travel plans for security reasons and was flying to Geneva via Paris, a frisson of excitement ran through the United Nations.

For an instant it seemed as though the organisation, only just beginning to get accustomed to its new-found power, was experiencing some of the danger it might entail. Thoughts turned immediately to the death of Señor Pérez de Cuéllar's predecessor, Dag Hammarskjöld, in an unexplained plane crash during a peace mission to the Congo in September 1960.

In reality, Señor Pérez de Cuéllar only changed his travel plans to visit President Mitterrand of France. But in many respects, his mission to Iraq is reminiscent of peace efforts by previous secretaries-general, especially Mr Hammarskjöld's ill-fated trip.

The Congo ended in the death of its most fiercely independent leader. Hammarskjöld's plane came down as he flew to Ndole in then Northern Rhodesia to broker a ceasefire with secessionist forces in the Katanga province of the Belgian Congo, which the United Nations was trying to lead to independence. To this day, speculation continues about whether he was shot down.

Some diplomats believe that for the first time since the Congo, the United Nations is an actual party to an international dispute and that complicates Señor Pérez de Cuéllar's mission to Baghdad. "You can't be one of the main players and a mediator," said a senior Western diplomat.

But Brian Urquhart, a British who helped found the United Nations and served Hammarskjöld, points to a closer parallel with Hammarskjöld's successful attempt to obtain the release of 15 American airmen captured by China during the Korean war.

Just as in the Gulf, the UN had taken a stand against China and America was not in contact with its enemy. Although bound by a UN resolution, Hammarskjöld went to Peking in 1955 and obtained their release. In doing so, he acted in his capacity as secretary-general, using his own discretion to seek to achieve peace.

"The secretary-general is the servant of everyone, and yet he is independent of everyone," Mr Urquhart said yesterday. "Making a concession to him is not a loss of face. It is simply behaving as a good member of the United Nations." Hammarskjöld was the most active of Señor Pérez de Cuéllar's predecessors — intervening also in Suez in 1956 and visiting Lebanon in 1958 — but other secretaries-general have also made high-profile peace missions.



Peace mission: Javier Pérez de Cuéllar addressing newsmen before his visit to Baghdad. He said that he was "not taking any specific proposals but to listen and to be listened to"

Major says time is running out but conflict still not inevitable

By KERRY GILL

JOHN MAJOR, the prime minister, last night admitted in Edinburgh that time was running out for attempts at finding a peaceful solution to the Gulf conflict and expressed his gloom at the prospect of war. "I think that the situation is gloomy and that one has to be pessimistic about the chance of Saddam Hussein withdrawing, but it is not inevitable," he said. "War can be stopped at any moment by Saddam Hussein withdrawing."

Mr Major said the allies had tried various initiatives, but all had been pushed aside by the intransigence of Saddam. "I think it is right for (Javier) Pérez de Cuéllar to go there. I hope even at this late stage that the Iraqis will withdraw from Kuwait... but if that isn't the way it is to be, then there can be no doubt in anyone's mind that our troops will forcibly remove him from Kuwait."

Mr Major said he would meet James Baker, the American Secretary of State, at RAF Alconbury tomorrow. People should not read too much significance into the meeting, it was one of a series the British government had held with United States officials, he said. Commenting on threats of terrorism in Britain should war break out, Mr Major said: "We are aware of that danger... Clearly we are aware of the danger that if there were hostilities there might be an attempt by terrorists to misbehave both here and on the Continent and in the United States, of course. We are well aware of that possibility and we are well prepared for it but you will understand if I say no more than that."

Mr Major said he hoped the UN peace mission was successful, in spite of the imminent deadline. "If it is possible to settle peacefully and have the Iraqis withdraw from Kuwait, that is clearly the best thing to happen. I hope very much it succeeds."



Driving force: John Major, watched by his wife, Norma, in the seat of a mock cockpit at GEC Ferranti yesterday

GENEVA NOTEBOOK by George Brock

All the world's a stage in city of restraint

The stage machinery of international diplomacy is falling into place in a city which has had the lion's share of negotiations this century. The lakeside home of countless international organisations was not only keen to host the Baker-Aziz talks, but senses that there may be more of the same to come in the next few months.

The manager of the Intercontinental Hotel (also George Shultz's favourite Geneva backdrop) looked radiant this week as his plate-glass block was briefly invaded by the American and Iraqi travelling caravans.

The American-Iraqi circus moved on and was replaced yesterday by the UN-European show. The European apparatus

sprouts less high technology. There are fewer walkie-talkies, the snakes of black Mercedes limousines are shorter, and there is no sniffing by Bernie, the US Secret Service dog. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the UN secretary-general, swept out of town trailing the European foreign ministers in his wake. But Geneva is sure they will be back.

For a country which has preserved its peace more successfully than almost any other European state, Switzerland has a peace movement which is so restrained as to be almost invisible. Opposite the silent and opulent Kuwaiti embassy, 150 demonstrators blocked the road outside the Baker-Aziz meeting. A few yards further on, an unkempt Iraqi had hung white sheets from the trees by the gate: peace charms to ward off the spirits of war. A

"peace camp" was briefly set up on the patch of grass in front of the Palais des Nations. It was the ugliest I have ever seen. More work for peace is done by the Swiss government, who chartered the plane in which Señor Pérez de Cuéllar flew to Baghdad.

The first new word of the Gulf confrontation was coined by a Frenchman: *l'après-crise*, as in *après-ski*. This describes the crucial period of negotiation after any fighting which might take place. It is crucial if, as the French are, you are trying to concentrate everybody's attention on the period in which a wider Middle East peace conference might be organised.

UNITED STATES

Bush sends Israel top-level warning to keep lying low

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Bush is sending one of his most senior officials to Jerusalem, apparently to emphasise that despite the obvious threat to its security Israel must not launch a pre-emptive strike against Iraq which could shatter the international coalition.

His decision to dispatch Lawrence Eagleburger, the deputy Secretary of State, followed Wednesday's declaration by Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi foreign minister, that Iraq would not hesitate to attack Israel in the event of war. The White House said it took such threats seriously. On Thursday, Mr Bush telephoned Yitzhak Shamir, the Israeli prime minister, and urged Israel to continue to lie low and stay out of the Gulf confrontation.

An Israeli pre-emptive strike, which might involve its warplanes flying over Jordan and Syria, would play into Saddam's hands by turning the conflict into an Arab-Israeli confrontation, placing the coalition's Arab members in an impossible position. Despite recent high-level discussions between Washington and Jerusalem, officials here remain concerned that Israel might strike first if it believed it was about to be attacked.

Washington has promised that the US would retaliate if Iraq attacked Israel before the coalition attacked Iraq. To forestall an attack on Israel after a coalition offensive had begun, the US would try to destroy Iraq's Scud missiles on the ground in the first hours.

According to Les Aspin, chairman of the House armed services committee, Mr Shamir has agreed to limit Israel's retaliation if it is hit by Iraqi missiles, and the coalition's Arab members would accept that. "It would be an eye-for-an-eye retaliation or, given the Israelis, probably two eyes for an eye. That the Arabs can live with. They don't want Israel in the war on a daily basis," he said.

President Bush said last month that he was "convinced the coalition would not fall apart" if Saddam launched an attack on Israel. "I can't give you the specifics on it, but I'm absolutely convinced of it, and you can assume, the way I've answered the question, that we've equated about that," he said.

In other developments, President Ozal of Turkey claimed yesterday that nearly 800 Iraqi soldiers had defected to his country, which shares a border with Iraq, since the Gulf confrontation began. Predicting a short war, he told the *Washington Times* that the deserters "all say how demoralised the entire army is. Their planes seldom fly and their tanks move as little as possible as they are short of spare parts. They

have never really experienced air attacks as Iran had very few serviceable aircraft. And they tell us that their army would cut and run when faced with the overwhelming, massive firepower of the coalition forces."

Richard Cheney, the US defence secretary, gave warning that in seeking to liberate Kuwait, American forces might carry the battle into Iraq itself. The US was not seeking "to conquer Iraq... or occupy Baghdad," he said. "But we are prepared, if we have to... to expel him (Saddam) from Kuwait. And in doing so he should understand that there is no sanctuary inside Iraq itself."

Details are emerging of Wednesday's meeting in Geneva between Mr Aziz and James Baker, the American Secretary of State. Participants said Mr Baker spent more than two hours setting out Washington's case for an Iraqi withdrawal, starkly outlining the coalition's military capabilities. He told Mr Aziz: "Don't think, if war comes, this will be parallel to your previous experience... Understand what you're up against."

Scholars of Islam allot places in hell

Nicosia — Moderate Muslim religious leaders urged President Saddam Hussein yesterday to withdraw his troops from Kuwait "how now tomorrow" to prevent war in the Gulf. They also called on Saddam's one-million-strong army to disobey their leader. "Otherwise, they are losers whose place is in hell," they said.

In a statement, issued after a three-day meeting in the holy city of Mecca, the religious scholars said Muslims should never forgive Saddam for invading a fellow Muslim country. The statement was carried by the Saudi press agency and received in Cyprus.

"It is a sin to show that Islam is a religion that condones oppression," it said. "Our bold word to Saddam Hussein is: leave Kuwait... leave now not tomorrow." The participants also said the decision by Saudi Arabia to invite foreign troops was justified by threats to their security. (Reuters)

Patriot missiles

Amsterdam — The Netherlands plans to send two squadrons of conventional ground-to-air Patriot missiles to Turkey to help defend that country from a possible Iraqi attack. A defence ministry spokesman said the squadrons, each comprising five missile systems, would be sent in the next few days. (Reuters)

Spanish leave

Madrid — Spain began moves to evacuate its nationals from the Middle East, with 20 expected to leave Dubai for Madrid aboard a military plane and 300 more to be flown out over the weekend. The foreign ministry said about 300 Spanish citizens had asked to be evacuated. Spain's ambassador to Iraq, Ignacio López de Churruarín, has left the Iraqi capital for Amman. But the embassy continues to remain open. (Reuters)

Reagan's plea

Washington — Former President Reagan said he believed there would be war with Iraq and has urged Congress to support President Bush's policy of using force if necessary. "Congress should pass a resolution that they will be behind the president if (he) has to take military action," Mr Reagan said in an television interview in Los Angeles. (Reuters)

Cyprus refuge

Nicosia — Cyprus will provide facilities for foreigners fleeing the Gulf and Middle East as hundreds of people began arriving here. A government communiqué said police and security forces have been placed on alert. Special arrangements have been taken at Cyprus hospitals to treat sick and injured. (AFP)

JAPAN

Kaifu stays put to seek a solution

FROM JOE JOSEPH IN TOKYO

TOSHIO KAIFU, the Japanese prime minister, yesterday cancelled a trip through Asia he was to start tomorrow because, he told cabinet colleagues, he had decided to stay in Tokyo to pursue a peaceful Gulf solution.

Nobody seems to know what Japan really thinks about events in the Gulf, and to many Western policymakers, the nation has again been tested and found wanting. Tokyo has been demanding a superpower's say in international politics, but its low diplomatic profile since the Kuwait invasion has made many Japanese aware that they still lack the will to occupy centre stage.

In a remark that captures the mood in Japan, however, Akio Morita, chairman of the Sony electronics and film empire, said: "Our Japanese economy is quite good enough to absorb some influence (from a war) by increasing our domestic demand. So I'm not pessimistic, as Japan can stand on its own two feet."

ISRAEL

Tel Aviv sees dangers in lack of US air liaison

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN JERUSALEM

CO-OPERATION between Israel and the United States on the Gulf is so poor that Israeli warplanes may be in danger of colliding with allied aircraft in the event of war, Israel's leading defence commentator said yesterday.

Zeev Schiff, of the newspaper *Haaretz*, said Israel and America had not arranged even "minimal co-operation and co-ordination". He said the exchange of information and intelligence had improved, but "operational co-ordination" had not. "The result is that, if Israel is compelled to

defend itself and respond to an Iraqi attack, there is a danger that Americans and Israelis will engage each other in the air by accident."

In a telephone conversation this week with Yitzhak Shamir, the Israeli prime minister, President Bush undertook to defend Israel if Iraq attacked. But Mr Schiff said Israeli defence officials were concerned about the lack of co-operation, and had repeatedly raised the matter at a senior level in Washington to no avail.

Haaretz said sorties by Iraqi aircraft into Israeli airspace would take two and a half hours, with attacking aircraft flying low to evade Israeli radar. Moreover, although the Iraqi air force had more than 700 aircraft, only 25 of its Su24 bombers were capable of operating against Israel.

"It can be assumed that the Iraqi air force commanders will not be prepared to endanger the greater part of this bomber force in a mission from which the chances of returning are not high," the paper said. Iraqi aircraft flying to Israel would be detected by American Awacs aircraft and the information would be immediately relayed to Israel, giving the Israeli air force time to intercept.

Haaretz said Iraq had prepared 50 launching pads along the Jordanian border from which its Al Hussein missiles could be launched at Israel. But Israel or America would respond with a paralyzing strike before the Iraqis could prepare a second launch. "Whatever happens, Israel will not be taken by surprise."

The launching of a ballistic missile required at least one hour's preparation, including setting the missile's guidance system. This preparation might be detected by American satellites, enabling Israel to strike before the missiles were even launched.

If the missiles did reach Israeli urban areas with conventional warheads, they would each cause about ten casualties. Chemical warheads could cause up to 2,000 casualties if the population was unprotected and unprepared. But the Israeli population had taken substantial precautions, and casualties would be much lower.



Shamir: told that US would defend Israel from an attack

WHILE Israelis yesterday stepped up preparations for war, thousands of Americans in Israel were advised by the American embassy in Tel Aviv to leave. An embassy spokesman said the families of US government employees in Israel had been "authorised to leave on a voluntary basis" and other US passport holders "should consider leaving".

Israeli defence officials said Israel was operating on the assumption Iraq would carry out its threat to strike at Israel, even though this invited certain destruction in retaliation.

In a rare television appearance, General Avihu Bin-Nun, the Israeli air force commander, said Israeli pilots were in their cockpits and ready to go. He said Israel had received two batteries of advanced Patriot surface-to-air missiles, and added: "We will be able, I believe, to keep our skies clear of the enemy."

The broadcast was seen as a departure from Israel's low profile over the Gulf confrontation. The general mood among Israelis remains relatively calm. The main fear is that Iraq will launch long-range missiles against Tel Aviv, though probably not Jerusalem, which has Islamic holy sites.

Israel radio confirmed reports over the past week of congestion at Tel Aviv airport as foreigners queue to leave. Ten airlines, including the American airline Pan Am but not TWA, have suspended air services to Israel. German, Dutch, Swedish and other nationals have already been advised by their governments to leave.

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Ratpack in the desert: members of the British press corps, suitably attired, get acclimatised for what might become a long stint in the sand and sun

Americans advised to leave Israel

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT IN JERUSALEM

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Petrol prices begin to rise

By KEVIN EASON MOTORING CORRESPONDENT

BRITAIN'S big oil companies last night signalled the start of rapidly increasing petrol prices with a rise at the pumps of 6.8p a gallon.

Shell, BP and Esso, the three market leaders, followed Texaco and put the price of four-star petrol up to 206.4p a gallon (45.4p a litre) and unleaded to 192.8p a gallon (42.4p a litre).

The move augurs petrol just 1.6p a gallon over the price at the pumps when Iraq invaded Kuwait at the start of August.

Other major oil companies with High Street forecourts will now move their prices into line over the next few days as fears deepen over the prospects of a Gulf war.

The industry gave a warning that yesterday's rises will be one of many pushing petrol as high as £3.25 a gallon as markets become increasingly nervous.

The previous highest price of 239.6p was reached in mid-October, but had fallen back dramatically by early December.

Since then, the price of bulk petrol supplies from the Rotterdam spot market has been edging upwards again, putting pressure on oil companies who say profits on garage forecourts have been under severe pressure.

Roy Reynolds, managing director of Shell UK Oil, said that since mid-December prices on the Rotterdam market had risen steadily "to a point where Shell can no longer hold pump prices at their current level". He added: "When Rotterdam prices fall, we shall, as always, quickly pass the reduction to motorists."

Meanwhile, plans to produce oil from wells drilled in Singleton Forest, near Chichester, West Sussex, were announced yesterday. Kelt UK Limited wants to develop exploratory bore holes, which have already produced oil, and drill up to four more wells at a cost of £1 million each.

The company said permission would be needed from the energy department before commercial production could start.

Global effect: The Meteorological Office yesterday discounted recent predictions of environmental catastrophe in the wake of a Gulf war. Fires in Kuwait's oil wells, thought to have been mined by the Iraqis, would be unlikely to affect the global climate, the Met Office said in an official report to government departments.

UNITED STATES

President lobbies Congress as it prepares for war vote

FROM PETER STOTHARD, US EDITOR, IN WASHINGTON

TODAY the Congress of the United States is to vote on Gulf resolutions which could crucially define the extent of American support for war. As President Bush lobbied both friends and opponents on Capitol Hill, it was not clear whether his request for a united voice against Saddam Hussein would prevail.

Mr Bush's best hope appeared to rest in the House of Representatives, more than a hundred of whose members were invited to snow-bound White House breakfast yesterday. Conservative Southern Democrats and Northern liberals with links to Israel seemed likely to tip the House in favour of the minority Republicans and the president.

Democrats in the Senate, skillfully led by their leader, George Mitchell of Maine, and Sam Nunn of Georgia, chairman of the Senate armed services committee, have kept their party more closely together, co-ordinating their tactics carefully with Israeli supporters such as Carl Levin of Michigan. A number of Southern Democrats support the president, including Charles Robb of Virginia and Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, but none has emerged as the much-needed influential "hawk" who can sway

undecided voters. Senator Nunn, on the other hand, does have a following among moderate and conservative senators, based on his long support of strong defence against the Soviet Union. He is accused by critics of merely courting the activist wing of the Democratic party in preparation for the 1992 presidential primaries. But critics within the administration are careful how they express themselves.

White House aides look back nostalgically to the days when Henry "Scoop" Jackson helped Republican presidents through the Cold War. In private, they rail at the "Vietnam Democrats" and their peace-at-any-price policies. They insist that a favourable vote is not necessary for the president to commit American forces to battle. In public, however, an atmosphere of bipartisanship is necessary.

Members of the Senate have shown themselves especially sensitive to their constitutional prerogatives on the declaration of war. Several speakers argued that if, after decades of allowing a high degree of presidential freedom, Congress did not reassert its rights, those rights would be relegated to history. The resolution sponsored by Senators Mitch-

ell and Nunn calls for continued application of sanctions and diplomacy to force Iraq from Kuwait. It also demands that Congress be consulted before the initiation of hostilities. By last night it had gathered momentum, propelled by a scholarly speech by Mr Nunn in which he drily attacked the notion that Kuwait was a "vital" American interest worth the loss of American life and argued that, just as the sanctions policy could not be guaranteed to succeed, nor could the policy of war.

The Republican counter-attack is on three fronts. In addition to the president's personal lobbying, Robert Dole of Kansas, the Senate minority leader, yesterday deployed William Webster, director of the CIA, to argue that sanctions were unlikely to compel Iraq to withdraw. At the back of his armoury is the threat of a filibuster today in which a small group of Republicans can prevent a vote by talking ad infinitum.

The White House hopes a filibuster will not be needed, and that America's legislators, having expressed their doubts and covered their backs, will support the president's UN-approved policy. Until the votes are counted, however, the lobbying will continue.

Forces chiefs agree tactics

By MICHAEL EVANS DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

A WAR plan has been drawn up and agreed on by the politicians and military commanders involved in the campaign to force the Iraqis out of Kuwait. Tactical commanders, however, are being told only the details that affect their units.

American and British officials are convinced that the coalition against Iraq is still solidly behind the United Nations Security Council resolutions demanding the total withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Militarily, however, there is some doubt about how many Muslim units will go forward into Kuwait. Even Egypt, one of the most stalwart members of the coalition, has not committed itself to offensive action but merely to a peacekeeping role in Kuwait. Egyptian forces will not enter Iraqi territory.

The war plan, designed in consultation with Saudi Arabian and British commanders by General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the American forces, and his headquarters staff, has been disclosed to both Western and Arab coalition partners, according to military sources.

However, operational details have been distributed selectively. For example, the Syrian commander in the Saudi Arabian desert, responsible for a paratroop brigade and an armoured division, has been given only the details that directly affect his units and their expected role in a war with Iraq.

Lieutenant-General Sir Peter de la Billiere, commander of the British forces in the Gulf, has been meeting General Schwarzkopf every day at the joint forces headquarters in Riyadh. His advice on tactics has influenced the plan. But it is possible that even he does not know every aspect of it.

General Schwarzkopf's main objective in the first few days of an attack will be to launch up to 2,000 air raids a day on key Iraqi military and industrial sites, it is widely expected. The targets in Iraq would include air bases, armament factories, supply lines, communication centres, ballistic-missile launch sites, missile assembly plants, railways, roads and President Saddam Hussein's bunkers.

Another key target will be Saddam's elite Republican Guard divisions on the Iraq-Kuwait border. According to military sources, if Saddam fears he is facing defeat he will want to preserve his eight guard divisions, since they are his greatest military asset.

"It is possible that Saddam will withdraw these divisions to ensure they are intact if he has to give up Kuwait," one source said. "He will then at least be able to satisfy himself that his most loyal troops are still around to support his regime."

American, British and Saudi bombers would be used to terrorise and demoralise the Iraqi forces in Kuwait with continuous pounding of their defensive positions. Giant B52s would fly in low to drop their huge payloads of 1,000lb and 2,000lb bombs.

The bombing could last up to two weeks, following a complex formula in which different squadrons would be assigned a variety of targets. The French have already been asked to ground their Mirage F1 jets while the air-superiority battle is fought, because of the danger of confusing them with identical Iraqi planes.

Poll shows British public backs use of force to retake Kuwait

By ROBIN OAKLEY, POLITICAL EDITOR

THREE-quarters of the British public believe that allied forces should be used to retake Kuwait by force, and more than half the public believe that invasion should follow immediately after the January 15 deadline, according to a new Mori poll.

Recent surveys in France and

Belgium have shown opposition to military action. But in Britain 58 per cent of those polled believed that allied forces should remove President Saddam Hussein from power, even if he does withdraw his forces from Kuwait.

The Mori poll, conducted for the Free Kuwait Campaign on

Wednesday and Thursday this week, brings good news for the government. There is a high satisfaction rating for ministerial efforts over the Gulf confrontation, with 64 per cent satisfied and only 27 per cent dissatisfied with the way the government is handling the situation. This compares with a rating of 51:41 for the American government's efforts, 57:31 for the United Nations response and 43:39 for the way Arab nations opposed to Saddam have handled the situation. The British government thus has a net satisfaction rating of 37, compared with 26 for the UN, 10 for the Americans and 4 for the Arab allies.

The additional bonus for John Major is that the poll, taken as the prime minister returned from his well-publicised trip to the Gulf, shows the Conservatives back in a 2 per cent lead over Labour.

A Mori poll a fortnight ago showed Labour leading on 45 per cent support to 41 per cent, and commentators were swift to assert that the Major government's honeymoon had ended. But the latest Mori poll shows voting intention at: Conservatives 44 per cent, Labour 42 per cent, Liberal Democrats 11 per cent, Green party 2 per cent, Nationalists 1 per cent and others 1 per cent.

It may be that growing signs of a split in Labour's ranks over support for military action in the Gulf are boosting the government, at a time when ability to handle a Gulf war is the dominant question. There is remarkable solidity in public support for the removal of Saddam from Kuwait. A Mori poll in November found that 69 per cent cared very much about the removal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and 20 per cent cared a little, much more than the 54 per cent who at the time said they cared very much about recovery of the Falklands.

MIDDLE EAST OBSERVER

Hopes rest on Saddam's keen sense of survival

THERE was a time in Baghdad when it could be said with certainty that President Saddam Hussein had a keen sense of survival. Such a time was, for example, March 1975, when he suddenly decided to concede to Iran navigational rights in the southern Shatt al-Arab waterway in return for the Shah cutting off aid to a Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq.

Today as Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the UN secretary-general, arrives at the presidential palace in Baghdad to intercede with Saddam on behalf of the rest of the world, the elder statesman of international diplomacy will no doubt hope that his host's sense of survival cannot be deserted him. But the UN emissary cannot be confident in his hope. Saddam is older by almost 16 years and seems impatient to realise his dream of dominance over "the Arab nation" sooner rather than later.

Saddam knows, too, that if he is forced to withdraw from Kuwait, the West will be

reluctant to forget his costly trespass and return Iraq to the "most favoured nation" status it enjoyed before August 2 last year. Before that date, Baghdad was estimated to be in debt to the tune of at least \$65 billion (£34.2 billion), including \$15 billion to Kuwait. Since then, Saddam has not sold a single barrel of oil.

What guarantee will there be that if Saddam grants the wish of Señor Pérez de Cuéllar and recalls his soldiers from Kuwait, the world will unfreeze his assets, "restructure" his debts and grant him new credits?

Under such circumstances, his country's development — by which Saddam nearly always means military development — will come to a halt and the prospects of expanding Iraq territorially will recede.

Thus, while Señor Pérez de Cuéllar's appearances on Baghdad television paying respectful homage to the court of the would-be caliph will boost the Iraqi leader's ego, his

intercession will not, by itself, weigh heavily on Saddam's mind. What will really interest Saddam will be to see whether he carries any messages from Washington. Would, for example, the US promise to press Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to write off Iraq's debts, and would Western oil companies buy Iraqi oil at high enough prices to ensure the continuity of Iraq's "development"?

The fate of the Palestinians will be the mere slogan it always was, unless, of course, the United Nations does not send the kind of messages Saddam wants to hear.

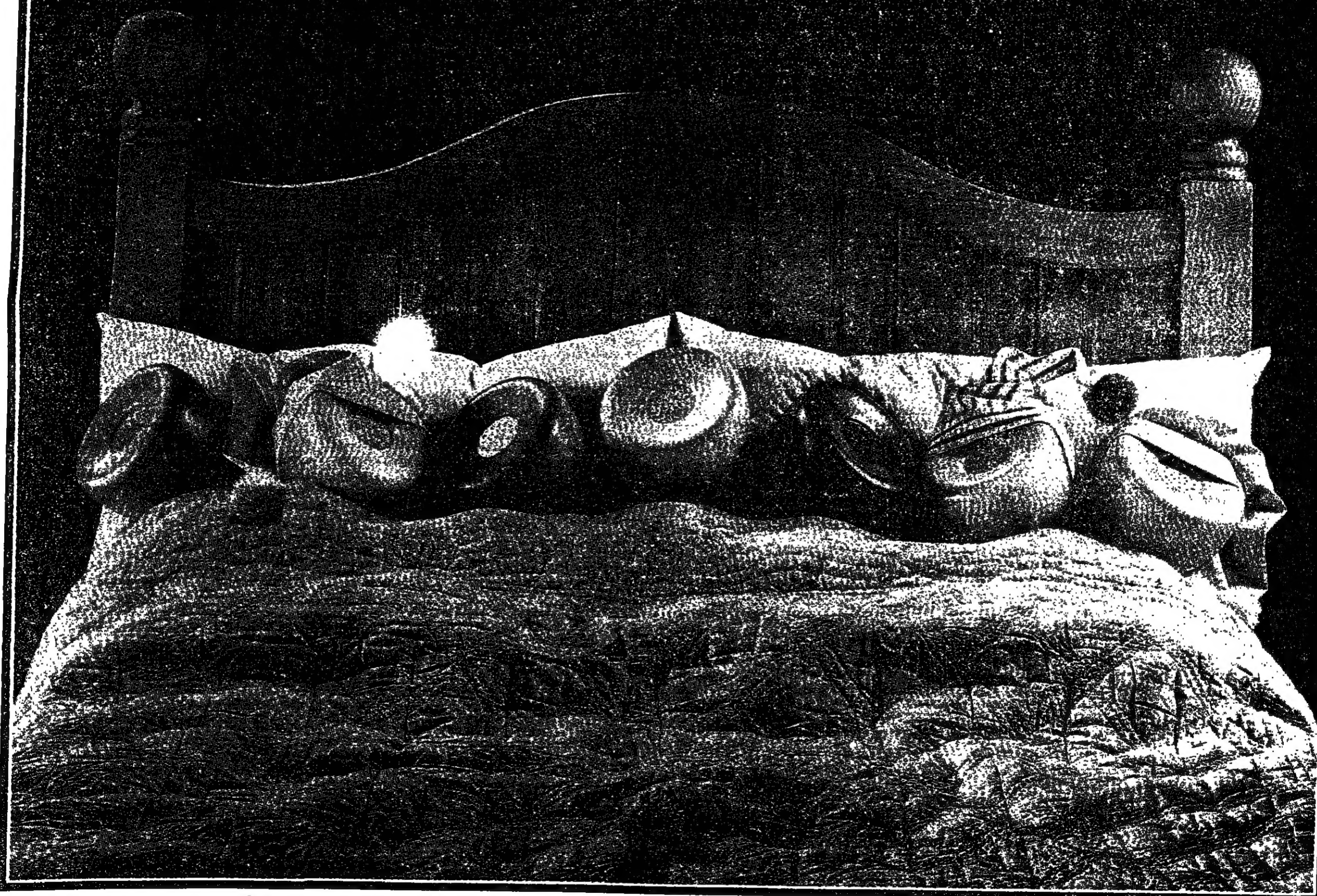
In the end, it may well be the case that, even if Saddam has retained his survival instincts, he may be convinced that no such choice faces him any longer and that he either wins Kuwait — and with it the eventual leadership of the Arab world — or loses everything, including his life.

Hazhir Teimourian

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Clifford Longley

When might is moral

In the desert, but not for the moment in the Gulf, a sheriff comes upon a lynching. He draws his revolver on the mob. He fires, and someone falls dead. The mob flees. The absolute at issue here, morally, is "Thou shalt not kill", and legally, the crime of murder. Taken in isolation from the rest, it seems that the sheriff is in the wrong.

But how does the sheriff describe his actions, morally and legally? He says he prevented a lynching, and unfortunately a man died. And in justification he too would say "Thou shalt not kill".

Thus any judgment of his conduct will depend on how widely the frame is drawn. To put a line round the shooting alone is to define it as murder. Neither law nor morality permits murder, and it is no answer to such a charge to say that on the whole the consequences were good. To draw it round the whole event, however, is to accept the sheriff's version. In this case the law would permit an enquiry into the sheriff's motives and the result of his action, and would find that he had deterred would-be lynchings. Morally, if it had any sense, would say the same. So the wrong conclusion, that the sheriff had committed murder, comes from drawing the frame too narrowly, ignoring context and consequences.

But it may be drawn more narrowly even than that. What the sheriff actually did was to move one finger. Everything else was a consequence of that. And in itself moving a finger is neither a crime nor a sin.

Thus the same incident may be judged, both morally and legally, in different ways depending on what is considered to be the defining boundary of the incident. If none of the consequences is incorporated into the definition of the incident, so that it is reduced to a finger movement, or if all of them are, so that it is seen as the prevention of a lynching, it is not morally wrong. If some of the consequences are deemed part of the incident (the finger movement, the bullet leaving the barrel, striking the rioter, causing the fatal injury), but not others (detering the mob, saving the lynch victim), then it is indeed judged wrong.

And the selection of some consequences and the rejection of others is arbitrary. Short of considering everything, there is no logical way to identify a particular level of analysis which is in some sense truer than the others and which will therefore give a truer answer to the moral questions. Those who would like the sheriff condemned will select one set of circumstances, those who want him praised, another set.

It is in fact arbitrary even to stop at the point where the mob disperses. If we knew more of the

facts, we might find the sheriff had started a civil war. Or stopped lynchings for ever.

All this is enough to give casuistry a bad name — at least among those who have already made up their minds for or against the sheriff — and indeed this example was devised by a Jesuit. But the discussion is not about the absolute validity of "Thou shalt not kill", more about the difficulty of finding something to apply it to. The Jesuit surely has a point. In his case, the point was that nuclear deterrence need not necessarily be rejected as immoral because it involves a conditional intention to kill millions of the enemy's civilians, on the principle that it is wrong to intend to do what it is wrong in reality to do.

That is to select only some of the possible consequences. The overall intention of nuclear deterrence and the overall consequence, leaving nothing out, was the preservation of world peace. And because that is the highest order of meaning at which the matter can be considered, it is the only point at which an absolute moral judgment can be made.

Back in the Gulf, the sheriff has drawn his gun. Some who have supported him thus far want him to go no further. They have killed the bullet into the barrel, but only to frighten the mob. What distinguishes this point, however, is not a change in the moral character of the event because of the transition from intention to action, for the overall intended consequence remains the same — the dispersal of the mob and the prevention of the lynching — but the prospect of a sudden quantum leap in the scale and uncertainty of the intermediate consequences. Consequences in a series of small steps are predictable, but a large step is a discontinuity in the series, when it seems anything may happen. The sheriff is about to unloose a bullet, or a war, or even his own lynching. How can he know for certain that his next action will lead to the final result he intends, even if it seems a reasonable expectation?

There can be no answer to this pressing practical question, only doubt and anxiety, faith and hope. The great temptation is to turn it into a moral question, in the hope the answer might lie that way, and doubt and anxiety thereby be relieved. But that is to draw the moral frame narrowly, defining the event by only some of its circumstances.

The step from drawing the gun to pulling the trigger, cataclysmic though it may be in immediate effect, should not shift the moral interpretation. Within the wider frame, the issues have not changed. Having drawn his gun, the sheriff must surely squeeze the trigger if the lynch mob is to be stopped.

...and moreover

MATTHEW PARRIS

"NUMBER 17. Best!" was the message (in Spanish) on the placard by the side of the road from Quito to Riobamba. A few miles further, this message had been summarised in red paint on a kerbside rock. "17" said the rock.

"Support 12!" urged posters in the next village. "Number 10 — the people's choice!" was the answer graffiti. Nearby, someone had tried to scrawl "9" repeatedly on the side of a building; but each 9 had been deleted, and overwritten "10". It seemed that Ecuador was gripped by numerical civil war.

Our guide explained. This was party political advertising from the most recent election. "Who won?"

"12."

"Don't your parties have names?"

"Yes, but nobody can remember them. There are 17 parties. Anyway it's for the benefit of the Indians. They can't really understand everything about politics. So we have numbered our political parties in chronological order. The oldest was number 1, and, with the creation of new parties, we have reached 17. If a party dies, its number is reallocated to a new one."

I looked unconvinced. "It's easier for the Indians," she explained. "Take 9, for instance. That is the orthodox Communist party, the Frente Amplio de la Izquierda: Marxists/Leninists, I think. But who can remember all that? The Indians certainly can't. I can't always remember it myself. So supporters of the party just tell the Indians to vote for 9, to make their lives much better. Opponents, of course, tell the Indians that 9 will make their lives much worse."

"Aren't voters confused?"

"Yes, very. But voting is compulsory. They have to choose or they will be fined. This helps them make a decision. Oh look! There's a 4. You don't see many; 4 must have been active here."

Another howling flashed by: "Up with 10! Down with 17!"

"In fact, 12 won this time. 17 are a socialist party so there is a lot of noise, but not much sup-

port. Then there is number 10. This is the poor people's party so a great many people vote for it, of course. It never seems to get anywhere, though."

She seemed perplexed that we should find the system odd. "Do English people really remember the titles of all the parties?" Well, do we? I fell to considering whether the Ecuadorian approach could be adopted in Britain. Think of the saving in newspaper!

The Whigs would have been 1, the Tories 2. After them, a series of shorter-lived movements would have shunted the nascent Labour party to at least 7. The Liberals might have collected the 1 number plate from the Whigs, but we would have challenged their right to transfer the cherished number to the Alliance, though Dr Owen would have fought hard to campaign under "El Numero Uno". The rebel Owen would have been stalked off at about 24, Lord Sutch sneaking in with a new joke-party to snatch the temporarily vacant 1 slot, while the Lib Dems (stuck with 25 — which is more than they have MPs) taunted Dr Owen with "Come in, number 24, your time is up."

But why stop there? Politicians could be abbreviated to single letters. K would have faced the dreaded T until she was knifed by H and supplanted by M. Mrs Thatcher's slogan in the leadership campaign would have been "I for 2".

And how about policies? Surely Roman numerals would save us spelling out the hackneyed phrase every time? "Sale of council houses" (i) came first. "Privatisation of nationalised industries" (ii) came next, while "tax cuts for the rich" (xiv) came later. Did the Romans have an xxxx? It would do nicely for the poll tax.

From our Political Correspondent: At a press conference yesterday, K slammed what he called "the grisly legacy of T" but hinted at a more conciliatory attitude to ii & xiv. "In 1979," he declared, "they said that 7 wasn't working. M has yet to show that 2 can do better. No wonder M has pitched H into the xxxx..."

Why it will be a tough Budget

Alan Budd believes the recession and constraints imposed by ERM membership provide little room for manoeuvre

Treasury can hardly expect to do more than consider the broad approach to the Budget and ask which ideas for changes in the tax system are worth taking further. What should the broad approach be? One way of answering the question is to start with the 1990 Budget and to recall what Mr Major laid down in his medium-term financial strategy. Last year the figures for 1991-2 implied a public sector debt repayment (that is, a surplus) of £3 billion, with a move to a balanced budget in 1992-3. If we still believe in the medium-term financial strategy, that should be the starting point of the discussions.

Current forecasts suggest that the public sector borrowing requirement for this financial year will be close to zero, compared with the Budget forecast of a surplus of £7 billion. Most of that error is due to higher than expected public spending. The government has already revised its spending plans for 1991-2 upwards by £8 billion. To some extent this will automatically be offset by higher tax revenues (since inflation is higher than expected), but it looks as if the medium-term strategy figure would require significant tax increases.

So the government's own approach suggests a tough Budget. But there have been two important changes in the past year. First, the economy is in a recession deeper and longer than was expected a year ago. Second, Britain is now a member of the exchange-rate mechanism. Should these changes affect the Budget judgment?

In its Budget Report last year, the government said that frequent large changes to the instruments of fiscal policy "are harmful to supply performance and potential destabilising", so that seems to rule out the deliberate use of tax cuts or increases in public spending to boost demand and so counter recession.

As for ERM membership, this seems to present the government with a dilemma. As well as ruling out the use of fiscal policy for short-term adjustment, the Budget statement said that monetary policy could "be used more flexibly to make short-term adjustments to the policy stance". But

now that we are in the ERM, monetary policy has to be dedicated to maintaining the exchange rate within its limits.

So we head for a deep recession, unable to relax monetary policy (because of the ERM) and unwilling to relax fiscal policy (because the government believes it should impose a medium-term objective of a balanced budget). It is enough to spoil anyone's weekend.

There is a tempting but mistaken argument that runs as follows. ERM membership, and the accompanying high interest rates which are necessary to maintain the value of the pound, are causing a severe recession. It is therefore sensible to have a generous Budget to counter these harsh effects. The Chancellor should therefore cut taxes and increase public spending.

That argument fatally fails to recognise why we are in the ERM and why membership is proving painful. We are in the ERM because of the hope that it will provide a counter-inflationary policy more credible than our own, unaided attempts.

We have, in effect, sacrificed our choice of both the destination in terms of inflation and of how rapidly we reach it. The only question is the cost in terms of lost output and temporarily higher unemployment. Membership is proving painful because there are questions about our commitment. As the markets become convinced that we intend to maintain the value of the pound, it will not be necessary to keep interest rates so high, and the recovery of economic growth can start.

That suggests that ERM membership, far from providing a justification for a generous Budget, provides a strong argument for a tough one, as evidence of the government's determination to bring inflation down.

How tough should it be? The Chancellor can reasonably wait for more news about the economy, but at this stage it is difficult to believe that he will have any scope for generosity at all. At the most, one might expect him to raise tax allowances. That need not prevent him from making adjustments to help the lower paid or to relieve the hard-pressed business sector, but any such help must be paid for elsewhere.

The author is economic adviser to Barclays Bank plc.

Golden treasury neglected

Brian Alderson thinks children should be encouraged to go far beyond the latest list of recommended reading



The late Roald Dahl, demonstrating that his work can be enjoyed by the average seven-year-old

Over the last 100 years or more there have been regular outbreaks of despair about the standard of children's reading. The present fuss differs only in the coincidence within the space of a few days of four quite separate manifestations of criticism and concern.

On January 4, *The Times* reported the fears of the Council for University English that students would emerge from their education under the National Curriculum "lacking the skills ... to read English at university".

On January 10 some confirmation could be found for that view in the report by Her Majesty's Inspectors that the standard of reading was low in 20 per cent of the nation's schools (and "high" in only 30 per cent). In between those dates, *The Times* also carried an account of the education department's plans for testing the reading of seven-year-olds, and a letter from the chief executive of the Library Association suggesting that the decline in school library services represents a "short-sighted lack of investment in our children's future".

What lies at the heart of these four examples is the genuine conviction, much to be welcomed, that the reading of books is a good thing. What they lack is the recognition of a central contradiction: that children's literature is at once an extraordinarily diverse and an extraordinarily neglected field of activity.

There are at least 20,000 children's books in print at any one time, and the pool is topped up by at least 5,000 new books and new editions every year. These 20,000 titles are not, however, a homogeneous body of material to be enjoyed by all children all at once. They range from simple productions such as board-books with no words in them to self-conscious explorations of teenage angst, and they include such categories of writing as nursery verse and traditional tales, animal stories and fantasies — genres which have evolved over a long period.

The mixture is rich and complex and offers scope for a close matching of the abilities, interests and temperaments of individual children. With books that will inspire them with an enthusiasm to read more.

Unfortunately, an awareness of

the potential of all this material is acquired only by the most hard-headed methods, if it is acquired at all. As texts to be studied, compared, criticised or enthused over, children's books still exist in primeval darkness — and indeed, there are schools of thought which hold that any minute examination of books for children is comparable to breaking butterflies on wheels, or that they are beneath the dignity of serious literary scholarship.

So far as I know, there is only one university English department (at Cardiff) which includes an option on children's literature; with children's books discussed with teachers and children's librarians I discern that there is no mandatory provision for children's literature

to be studied in any detail in courses of professional training. Whether these workers-with-children are given a good grounding in the books available for their charges is a hit-or-miss matter, and part of the trouble over the "real book" teaching-method arises from a widespread lack of knowledge about what the "real books" are.

Under these circumstances it would be nice to know more about the criteria by which the DES "recommended list" of books for the reading test was compiled — and perhaps to know who was responsible for compiling it as well. Julia Eccleshare, editor of *Children's Books of the Year*, may be right to welcome the emphasis it places on contemporary au-

thors, but this does not account for its almost perverse lack of attention to children's enjoyment of language. This failure to attend to one of the pleasures of reading is clear both in some of the undistinguished texts which were chosen (presumably because they have pretty illustrations) and in the omission of so much energetic poetry and traditional folk literature, which should surely be a *sine qua non* of the reading of the under-sevens.

An argument could, of course, be advanced that poetry and folk literature will only benefit from being omitted, since any list drawn up for testing will automatically engender rebellion among those tested — by which token the omission of such zingy

writers as Russell Hoban and Roald Dahl is perhaps also a good thing. (Mr Dahl never got on too well with the educationists, who were unable to reconcile the unalloyed vigour of his writing with what they saw as a horribly subversive view of their profession.)

There is, of course, also the possibility that much of the work of Dahl and other modern writers has been omitted because it is thought too difficult for the seven-year-olds who are to be tested. For the other surprising thing about the DES list is the very modest demands they make on children's capacity to absorb the printed word when divorced from pictures. It is not so long ago that seven-year-olds were reading Tove Jansson and C.S. Lewis.

This is where the approved list impinges upon the statement of the Council for University English, since one may easily perceive that a seven-year-old who cannot get beyond, say, Jane Hissey's *Old Bear* still has a long reading-road to travel in the few remaining years of childhood. It may well be that the failure to find longer and more stimulating texts for the child at this stage will have a knock-on effect into the period of secondary education.

The child who develops as a short-winded reader is a natural customer for the publishers of what the trade calls "teenage novels" — a category of fiction that was invented in America, under the influence of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Ostensibly "teenage novels" supply full-length stories designed to carry older children out of children's books and into books for adults; but in effect they form a comfortable continuation of earlier, simple satisfactions. Writers take on the persona of agitated youth which they then project in an undemanding domestic style, and readers are protected from too much in the way of subtle plotting or an extended vocabulary.

Our failure to exploit the riches of children's literature may lead to the coralling of adolescents into the dead end of "teenage fiction" that has for so long been a distraction from "real literature", from the clear path that leads from Quentin Blake to William Blake.

The author is *Children's book reviewer* for *The Times*.

How we shall go to war

Just how will America and its allies take the decision to attack Iraq? Although Downing Street remains understandably reluctant to discuss the mechanics of a declaration of war, President Bush is believed to have assured all the principal allies that they will be consulted, and John Major has been told that he is at the top of the president's list.

The consultation process is particularly sensitive as the allies are anxious to counter attempts by Saddam to portray the forces ranged alongside the Americans as little more than Bush's poodles. The matter was almost certainly discussed when Bush and Major spoke on the telephone on Thursday. However, Edward Heath, speaking with the experience of a former prime minister, says: "I would not think President Bush has been given the authority yet to commit our forces to war. He will have to speak to Mr Major to get his permission for an attack at a given time."

Sir Michael Howard, the historian, says Bush will probably seek agreement for an attack within a specified period rather than at an exact moment. "Allied leaders will be told by Bush that the troops are ready to go into action. Once they have given their consent they will be allowed to sleep in their beds when the attack itself begins. They will not have to be disturbed."

Major, however, is almost certain to instruct Downing Street staff to wake him, regardless of the hour. He will have to inform the Queen and must decide whether

to make a televised broadcast to the nation. Most commentators expect him to do so at the earliest opportunity, with Neil Kinnock offered equal air time. This would throw the spotlight immediately on the Labour disarray over military action.

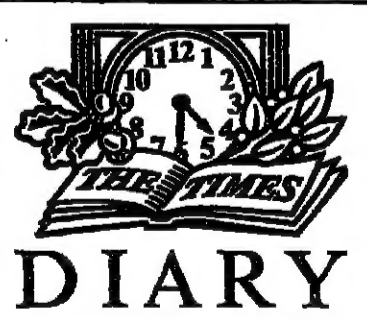
When British forces attacked the Falklands, Mrs Thatcher reserved her statement for the pre-TV Commons. The last war-broadcast was therefore during the 1956 Suez operation, when to Eden's fury the Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell, was given equal air time to distance the Opposition from the attack.

Downing Street is adamant that Major does not require the authority of Parliament before sending British troops into battle. "The authority to commit our forces in direct conflict is vested in the Crown," says a spokesman. "It is part of the royal prerogative, and that can be exercised only on the basis of advice from ministers. It does not need any legal preliminary approval from Parliament."

Revise, please

Wazi Kaunda, son of Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda and himself a cabinet minister, has been told to do his African history homework again. As the culmination of five years' study for his master's degree in political science at York University, he has just submitted a 100,000-word thesis on modern technology and Southern African development.

But the university's Southern African studies department is not satisfied and has asked him to make revisions. "It is not at all unusual," says a university spokesman. "We have to ask lots



of students to revise their theses. To be a cabinet minister and to be doing a doctorate at the same time is quite hard work."

Perhaps the Kaunda family should stick to making history instead of studying it.

Beyond recall?

Margaret Drabble is hoping that her latest literary assignment, a biography of the novelist Sir Angus Wilson, will not turn out to be more of a challenge than when she first presented him with the idea.

Wilson, author of some 50 books, including *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, *Hemlock and After* and *No Laughing Matter*, rebuffed Drabble's original offer to write the book 15 years ago. "Don't be silly, my dear," he said. "You've got much better things to do with your time than write about me."

Drabble now wishes she had been less easily put off, for Wilson, 77 — having finally agreed — is unwell in a Suffolk nursing home. She had been hoping to spend some time listening to him talk. "He is such a wonderful raconteur and mimic," she says. Instead, she had to make do with a Christmas trip to South Africa with her

husband, Michael Holroyd, to research Wilson's childhood background.

Drabble says: "Wilson's novels were the first adult contemporary work that I read at university. He is one of the great 20th-century creative writers, now unfortunately neglected and due for revival."

All sewn up

Charlotte's Embroidery, a knitwear shop near Marble Arch, has cashed in on the Gulf crisis by selling personally embroidered sweatshirts with the words "Free Kuwait" above the Kuwaiti flag. Among its best customers have been members of the Al Sabah clan, Kuwait's royal family, a number of whom are now in exile in London.

On Thursday five young Englishmen walked into the shop requesting a similar shirt, but embroidered with the words "Gulf Crisis 1991". When asked the reason, they said they were trainee doctors flying out to join the British forces this weekend. By chance a member of the Al Sabah family was in the shop at the same time. He immediately produced his wallet, peeled off £350 and bought ten shirts, two for each doctor. "The girls in the embroidery room agreed to work overtime and we had the shirts ready that evening," says a spokesman for the shop.

Misallocation

No-one seems to have told the Scottish Office civil servants handling the privatisation of Scotland's two electricity generating companies, Scottish Hydro and Scottish Power, about their department's

campaign for economic growth north of the border.

Ignoring its own strictures to the private sector to place more business locally, the Scottish Office has awarded the lucrative contract to handle registrations by telephone for shares in the first all-Scottish privatisation to a firm 300 miles away, in Bristol.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, a former Scottish Office minister, says: "I



shall be taking this up with the Secretary of State. It could have created 200 much-needed new jobs in Scotland." He might also remind the Scottish Office of the slogan it is currently using in its drive to boost the Scottish economy: "Locate in Scotland."

Chelsea chairman Ken Bates, fined £105,000 by the Football League yesterday over illegal payments to a player, appears to have taken John Major a little too literally. Shortly after he became Chancellor in October 1989, Major, a Stamford Bridge regular, visited the Chelsea dressing-room as the guest of manager Bobby Campbell. "Listen fellows, any win bonus today will be tax free," he jokingly told his favourite team. He was joking, wasn't he?

Help: Liz Gill,
make-up artist

Book a powder and paint job

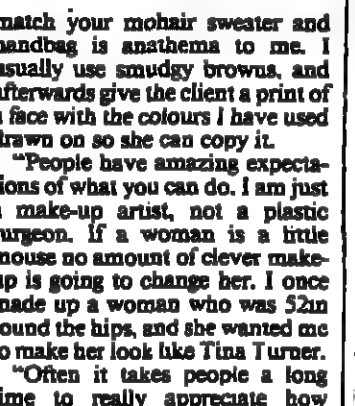
CLIENTS hardly ever do the most important thing make-up artist Liz Gill asks them to do before she arrives: make up their own face.

"I don't know what they normally look like, so I have no idea how much improvement I am making," she says. "Ideally I like to take a before and after picture so they can compare, but people feel intimidated by make-up artists and are ashamed to show us what they usually do, in case we criticise their choice of, say, bright blue eye shadow."

Ms Gill works in film and television studios, as well as for private clients in and around London who want something for a special night out, a wedding, or simply a new look.

"I never use products which are tested on animals, and as I am not selling expensive pots of cream and so on, people trust me. I am quite happy to use a client's own make-up if that's what she wants, unless she expects me to put on some ghastly pearly eye shadow - I would draw the line at that."

"Wearing an eye colour to



Lip service: Liz Gill

match your mohair sweater and handbag is anathema to me. I usually use smudgy browns, and afterwards give the client a print of a face with the colours I have used drawn on so she can copy it.

"People have amazing expectations of what you can do. I am just a make-up artist, not a plastic surgeon. If a woman is a little mouse no amount of clever make-up is going to change her. I once made up a woman who was 52m round the hips, and she wanted me to make her look like Tina Turner.

"Often it takes people a long time to really appreciate how much better they look, especially when the make-up is subtle, which is the way I prefer doing it."

Ms Gill charges £50 for a face; if two or three friends club together she will teach them all for the same price.

"I work by instinct," she says. "I just know what a person's character is like and therefore what their face should look like. What I don't do is terrorise anybody."

HEATHER KIRBY

Ms Gill's booking agent is on 071-734 6980.

Assets

Putting your house in order

THE stagnant housing market has created a boom in restoration and renovation. Instead of moving, home-owners are upgrading and extending their properties. In the case of Victorian and Edwardian townhouses, the trend is to refurbish them in their original style, focusing on restoration or replacement of period fixtures and fittings, rather than tacking on glitzy additions.

As well as adding value to a property, careful refurbishment offers the opportunity to create a look rather than live with a style inherited from a previous owner. Courses exist to help those prepared to tackle exteriors and interiors themselves, but all too often the aggravation and loss of personal time far outweigh the financial saving of DIY work. For anyone too busy or too impractical, a wealth of skilled craftspeople is available to put your house in order. Specialist jobs demand the services of an expert to achieve sound construction and a good finish. Some tasks that seem daunting - renewing plasterwork, for example, or a set of stair bannisters - can be

completed easily and quickly by someone who tackles such work all the time.

Other jobs may not be worth the cost or effort involved. Estate agents say that converting a loft or building a conservatory, garage or an extra bathroom is likely to add considerable value to a property; installing an outdoor swimming pool, however, is more trouble than it is worth.

Richard Page, of Savills' Sevenoaks office, advises: "It's best to concentrate on the main architectural features - fireplaces, panelling, windows, decorative brickwork - when restoring a period property. Modern windows and tiling show desperately, so these should be replaced with something nearer the original and it's also important to pay attention to detail - for example, the bannisters should be well finished."

"With major refurbishment jobs like kitchens or bathrooms, it's best to keep the style neutral. It's no good going for a black granite kitchen or a bathroom with corner whirlpool if you're thinking of upgrading a period property to sell when the market picks up."

PLASTERWORK

MORAN & Wheatley specialises in ornamental plasterwork. The company's craftsmen use plaster of Paris to restore and match old cornices and ceilings while retaining as much of the original plasterwork as possible. Cornices, ceiling roses, niches, columns, panel mouldings and entire decorative ceilings can all be tackled. The craftsmen will also reinforce period ceilings from the back and replace timbers without disturbing any decorative plasterwork.

Where new features need to be added (for example, if a room has been partitioned off and there is a demand for decoration on the "new" side), these can be supplied from a standard range for fitting by a decorator, by yourself or by the company. The standard features comprise copies of Tudor, Georgian or Victorian originals and some of the company's designs.

All the work is hand-crafted at the company's Bath workshops following an initial home visit to take moulds of the plasterwork to be copied.

Mr Moran & Wheatley, Avondale Studio Workshops, Avondale Place, Bath, Bath (0225 839678).

JOINERY

MIKE Twigg is a specialist joiner who will make anything in wood to suit any style of interior. If you are restoring a period property and need to refurbish doors, window frames, skirting, architraves or dado rails he can tackle the work. He can also make kitchen units, wardrobes and bedroom furniture in a style sympathetic to a particular room.

Everything is made to order, in any wood required. Anything from a small Gothic door to an oak staircase with turned spindles can be undertaken by Mr Twigg's team of 25 skilled craftsmen.

"Our speciality is staircase restoration, although we are asked for a lot of sliding sash windows, dado rails, special doors and built-in skirting," Mr Twigg says.

"Staircases are particularly challenging and we are one of the few companies who undertake 'wreath'

work, where the hand-rail twists and comes down to the first tread."

"We will work anywhere in the country, supplying and fitting as required. We are often asked to work on listed buildings and period properties. We use traditional tools as well as high-tech machines but in the end it all comes down to hand work."

Mr J. Twigg (Joinery), Vincent Mill, Vincent Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire (0625 610592).

IRONWORK

NEVIO Davighi has specialised in lighting restoration for nearly 40 years. He will undertake simple or more complex restoration of all types of light fittings, particularly chandeliers, and can bring new life to Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian wall lights, table lamps and standard lamps.

"I don't do Habitat-style modern lighting but I will repair good reproductions," he says. "All metal lamps now have to be earthed, so I strip out pre-war fittings and put in new wiring to make them safe." Converting continental or American fittings to British ones is a job he is frequently asked to do. He will also carry out polishing, silver-plating, gilding and lacquering to make old lights gleam again.

"It's fiddly work and very time-consuming," he says. All jobs are priced individually. A small repair to a table lamp may be as little as £5, while repairing a chandelier might cost about £500.

Mr Davighi, 117 Shepherd's Bush Road, London W6 (071-603 5357).

BLACK AND WHITE

RICHARD Quinell specialises in wrought and cast iron, bronze and brass work and will restore domestic and architectural metalwork (including railings, gates, coal scuttles, weather-vanes, brass bedsteads and copper kettles) around the country. He will also tackle fire-baskets and make replacements if they are not repairable.

Mr Quinell established the British Artists Blacksmiths Association in 1978. Next to his workshops he runs a gallery, Fire

& Iron, where new pieces by himself and other blacksmiths are on sale.

Mr Richard Quinell, Rowhurst Forge, Oxshott Road, Leatherhead, Surrey (0372 375148).

MUCH of Robert Carden's work is for the trade but he will repair and re-polish private clients' brassware, copper and pewter on request. His workshop can be visited by arrangement from Monday to Thursday.

Repair and re-polishing of fenders, bedsteads, coal scuttles, chandeliers and fire-irons are the kind of private commissions he accepts. He is often asked to repair Victorian and Edwardian bath mixer taps and bath racks. A coal scuttle costs about £6 to re-polish and lacquer and a double brass bedstead at least £100.

Mr Robert Carden, 12 Namrik Mews, St Aubyns, Hove, East Sussex (0273 738892).

BATHS

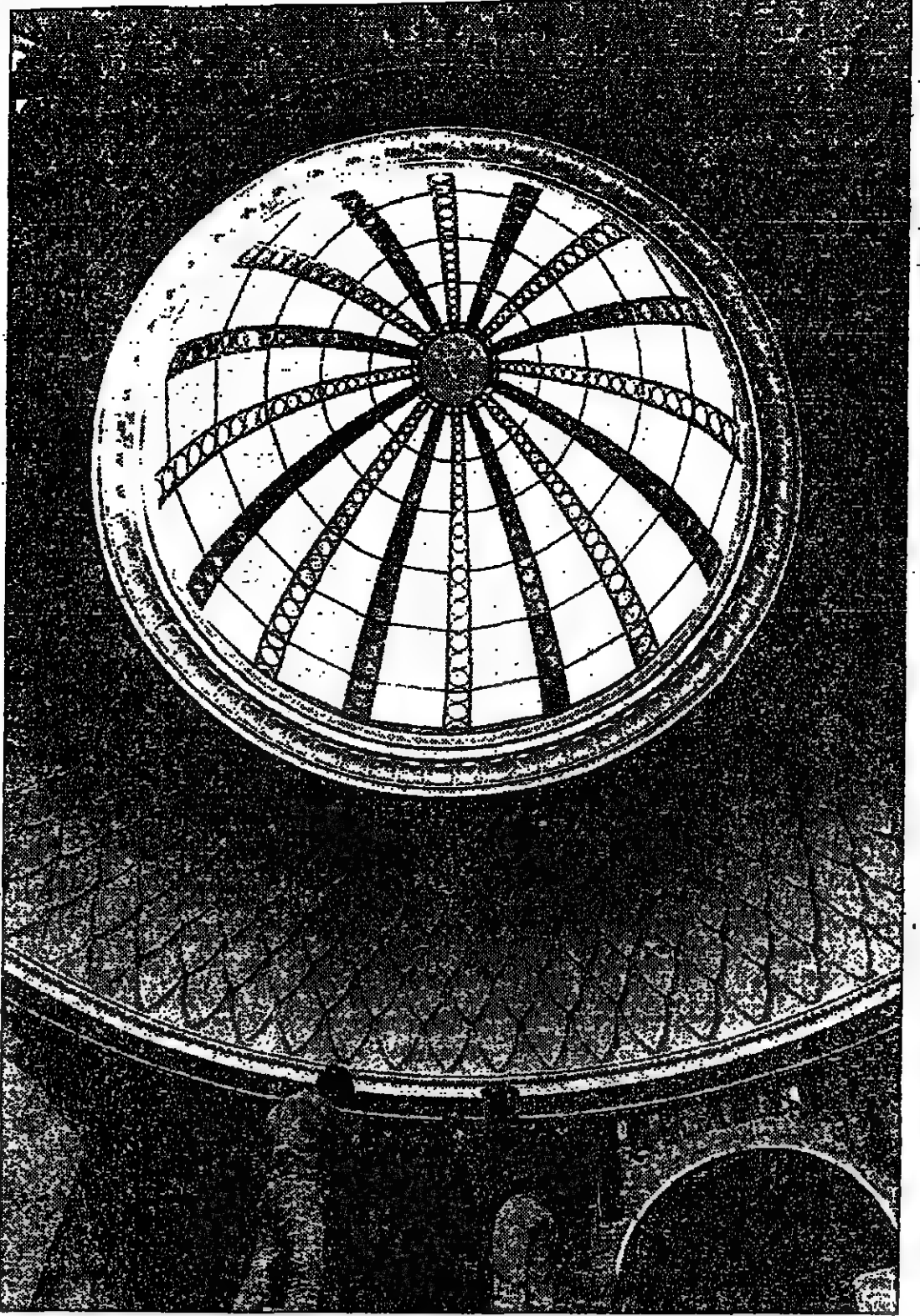
RENUBATH has been refurbishing and repairing baths for 25 years. Most repairs are for the trade but the company will work for private clients. So if you have dropped the shower head into a bath, chipped enamel can be replaced and the repair made invisible. It takes five hours' work to resurface a cast iron or pressed steel bath (plastic and acrylic baths are not accepted). First, the bath is cleaned and prepared. Then two coats of two-part epoxy resin are sprayed on. Finally, four top coats are applied.

Renovating a white bath in the London area costs £175 plus VAT. Repairing chipped enamel costs from £60 plus VAT, depending on condition. Cleaning a whole suite - bath, basin and lavatory - that has become discoloured costs from £50 plus VAT.

Mr Renubath, 248 Little Road, London SW6 (071-381 8337). For details of branches nationwide contact the head office (0265 656624).

STAINED GLASS

HENRY Haig specialises in stained glass design and restoration. "I prefer new work but I will also repair and restore stained glass in houses of all periods," he



Plaster perfection: Moran & Wheatley craftsmen at work on the dome at Northwick Park, Gloucestershire

Events in town

THIS WEEKEND

● New Year's antique collectors' fair: About 700 stands, free bus service from Alexandra Palace BR station.

Great Hall, Alexandra Palace, Wood Green, London N22 (081-365 2121). Tomorrow 11.30am-5pm, £2, accompanied child free.

● Gerrit Rietveld Exhibition about the work of a member of the De Stijl group of designers and painters of the Twenties. Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (061-273 4886). Today until Feb 18, Mon-Sat 10am-5pm (until 9pm Thurs), closed Sun, free.

● Boomerangs and throw sticks: Exhibition of the history and design of boomerangs and throw sticks - the latter do not come back - with 20 other artefacts, including a boomerang given to Edward VII by Aborigines in New South Wales. Bedford Museum, Castle Lane, Bedford (0234 353323). Today until Feb 10, Tues-Sat 11am-5pm, Sun 2-5pm, closed Mon, free.

NEXT WEEK

● National Trust lecture series: First of the year's popular lectures is "English Garden Style" with

John Sales, chief gardens adviser to the Trust. Purcell Room, South Bank, London SE1. Mon, 6pm, £4. (Book on 071-328 8800.)

● International mime festival: Highlights include El Tricicle, a leading Spanish company, at the Purcell Room, Tues-Sun, and Tag Theatre, a commedia dell'arte company from Venice, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Fri and Sat. Details of nationwide events from the International Mime Festival, 35 Little Russell Street, London WC1A 2HH (071-637 6861).

● History of flight theme day: A "bring history to life" session with actors assuming the characters of flying heroes and heroines. Aeronautilus Gallery, Science Museum, London SW7 (071-838 8000). Thurs, 10am-5pm, £3.50, child over five £1.75, free entry for all after 4.30pm.

● British horse and rider show: Nick Skelton opens the show with his horse Apollo, 11.20am Fri. Daily demonstration using the public's horses with Graham Fletcher. Also demonstrations by the Ascot Park Polo Club, Nigel Hollings Yard, and Western Riding Displays. Wembley Exhibition Hall, Wembley, Middlesex. Fri 10am-7.30pm, Sat, Sun 10am-6pm, £8, under 14s £3.

JUDY FROSHAUGH

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Mirabella

Winners and answers from The Times Quiz of the Year

Highest score winners:

Dora Baker, St Mark's Road, Bracknell, Berks.
Miss Ldu Cassé, Brownhill Road, Charders Ford, Hants.
Brian Bridgman, Buckingham Road, London E11.
David James, Welwyn Garden City, Herts.
Jonathan Wright, Draper's Lane, Hedon, Hull.

No one scored 100 per cent.

Answers

Picture questions:
A (b); B (d); C (d); D (c).

The rest:

1 The day Britain joined the ERM
2 Paddy Ashdown
3 Edwina Currie
4 Miner at Welsh pit about to close
5 To eat the remains of

Unmanned bodies in the

Ganges
6 Asking the British Army to stop exercising on the beach
7 Pizza mix
8 (a) Mr Justice Michael Davies
(b) Mr Justice Henry
(c) Mr Justice Harman
9 Arthur Scargill
10 Dies

11 Wreath

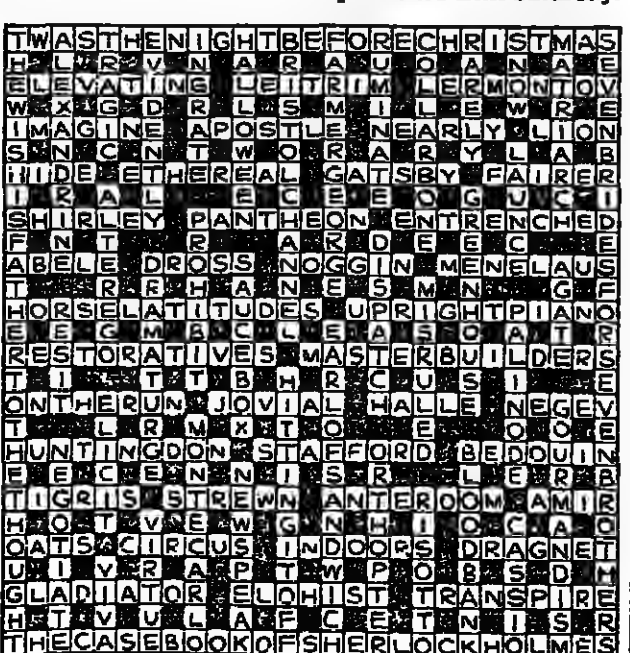
12 All four
13 Ruffed for a church restoration fund
14 The Queen
15 On the desk of the president of the World Wide Fund for Nature
16 Contraceptive pellets formerly scattered in the streets have been banned
17 Wanted to sing in new

records issued as theirs

18 Manuel Noriega
19 A Penelope Fitzgerald
20 (a) John Gummer
(b) Timothy Eggar
(c) Baroness Warnock (d) Patrick Nicolls (e) Nicholas Ridley (f) Ron Brown
21 Deng Xiaoping
22 Malcolm Forbes
23 Lord Cholmondeley

Christmas Jumbo crossword solution

Here is the solution to The Times Christmas Jumbo Crossword competition published on Monday December 24. The five winners, who each receive a prize of £50, are Mrs O.R. Easy, Sherwood Avenue, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire; Philip Neil, Overstone Road, Sywell, Northamptonshire; Jean Black, Charlton Close, Ickenham, Uxbridge, Middlesex; Malcolm Kennedy, Brookmead Close, Eastbourne, Sussex; and R.J. Kershaw, Trent Close, Sompington, Lancing, West Sussex. Entries for the New Year Jumbo Crossword competition must arrive by Monday. The solution and winners will be published next Saturday.



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THE TIMES

Source: TGI 1990

Folly of a London doctor

Home from home:
Dr William Davey

The Queen's homeopathic physician, Dr Ronald William Davey (William to his friends), took 13 hours to drive to his country home in Shropshire for the weekend of the great snowstorm in December, and when he arrived he was completely cut off with no heating, electricity, telephone or water. He did not regret making the journey, however, and was back in London at his consulting rooms in Wimpole Street by Monday morning — just as keen to embark on what proved to be an eight-hour journey the following Friday.

The lure in the countryside is a crenellated "folly" in a remote area near the Wrekin which can be reached only by twisting, single-track roads; a romantic retreat which also serves as a studio for Dr Davey's fiancée, Priscilla Kennedy, a mural artist who was born in Shropshire and whom he met by chance while she was out walking her dog.

The couple plan to marry next month from Miss Kennedy's formidable family home close by, the 17th century Acton Round estate. Later they intend to expand the stone-built 18th century folly into a properly warm and comfortable weekend home. This will mean, among other things, building a long conservatory to link it to the ham-like studio Miss Kennedy built because the main house, with its 2ft-thick walls, was too hard to heat in winter.

"We're going to build it out properly, with battlements," Miss Kennedy says. She points out a similar-looking structure just visible on the horizon which is owned, she says, by the actress Julie Christie — a genuine folly, she suggests, since it is uninhabitable and virtually inaccessible.

In the meantime, the couple spend most of the weekends in a single, light and airy room in the studio, which is decorated with furniture hand-painted by Miss Kennedy. She has been working on some pieces there for Kerry Packer, the Australian businessman, among other clients.

Although she has a home in Battersea, south London, Miss Kennedy, aged 43, spends much of the year staying with clients while she designs and paints trompe-l'œil fantasy scenes for them. She studied art in Italy and at the Malvern College of Education.

Dr Davey, who is fiercely proud of her work, has commissioned her to decorate a corridor in his consulting rooms, in the discreetly elegant suite which also serves as his London home. Miss Kennedy was also responsible for the colourful painting of the homeopathic flowers from his thesis which hangs above his desk in Wimpole Street.

"When we are married we hope to sell Priscilla's place in Battersea and find another home in London for weekends," Dr Davey says.

Between their local friends and Miss Kennedy's family — "the Shropshire mafia", as Dr Davey calls them — their social life in the country is busy.

"A lot of artists and writers have moved to the area because property prices are fairly cheap and it's



Recipe for happiness: Dr Davey and his bride-to-be, Priscilla Kennedy, at their country home — a stone-built folly and timber-clad studio barn

such a beautiful place to work," Miss Kennedy says. "I only bought a place in London so that I could start earning lots of money."

The move, she soon realised, was unnecessary as so many of her referrals are by word of mouth and so much of her work involves travelling.

Dr Davey, who is aged 47, divorced, with a son and a daughter from his previous marriage, was raised in London and had a country home in Sussex for many years. He admits he is not a true country person like his bride-to-be, but says he hankers increasingly after the life.

"I have to stay in London for my practice, but I love being away from the traffic fumes, the speed and the stress. I hope to spend more time in the country once we are married."

Since starting to come to Shropshire just over a year ago, Dr Davey has been renewing his somewhat rusty acquaintance with horse riding. Miss Kennedy looks after nearly two acres of gardens at the folly, growing many of the herbs and flowers which are used in homeopathic remedies — although she says she was unaware of their medicinal potential until she met Dr Davey, and has no plans to start supplying them for his practice.

"Many of Priscilla's friends were interested in homeopathy," the doctor says, "although she was not particularly. But, no, I have not set up a country practice here and do not intend to."

Most Londoners would find the haul to rural Shropshire, five hours by car on a good day, too arduous for regular weekenders. But Dr Davey still enjoys the novelty, and says the time seems to fly whether Miss Kennedy is with him or he is rushing to meet her.

VICTORIA MCKEE

Country events

THIS WEEKEND

● **Weekend walks:** "Birds of the park in winter" — meet the Voluntary Countryside Ranger at the Clock Tower, Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland, today 1.30pm. Take binoculars. "Hough Hill Farm in Winter" — meet the farm secretary at the farm office, Hough Hill, before Shindcliffe Bridge, on the A177 outside Durham, tomorrow, 2pm. Both walks 80p, child 40p. Border Country six-mile guided walk — meet Out Lane bus terminal, west of Huddersfield on the A540, today 1.15pm.

● **North Cotswolds antiques fair:** Range of collectables and antique items. Pre-1820 date items. Seaway House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. Today, tomorrow, 11am-5pm, £2.50.

● **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds cruise:** There may be some places left for the journey along the River Exe, accompanied by expert ornithologists, to see wintering avocets and other wading birds. If you miss out, however, there will be another expedition on March 2 and 3 (booking now). Exmouth Docks, Exmouth, Devon. Today 9.45am, tomorrow 10.45am, £5.50, child £3. Booking and further details on 0392 426521.

● **Whitlesay straw bear festival:** Originally, a sort of ploughboy "trick or treat" held on the Tuesday after Plough Sunday when the straw bear went begging for money for the out-of-work ploughmen. Today, the huge "bear" leads a 250-strong parade of Morris, Molly, sword and clog dancers, musicians, street entertainers and the plough to local pubs, dancing at all venues. Market Place and Market Street, Whitlesay, Cambridgeshire. Today, 10.30am-dusk, free.

● **Bridgewater Boats open day:** Chance to view the fleet of 12 narrow boats, all named after T.S. Eliot's Cats and to learn more about canal holidays. Bridgewater Boats, Canal Wharf, Birmingham, Hertfordshire (0442 863315). Tomorrow 10am-4pm.

● **Holiday exhibitions:** Local, regional and overseas tourist board representatives, travel agents, tour operators and overseas property agents. Also a small craft fair. Town Hall, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Today, tomorrow, 10.30am-5pm, £1, child free.

● **International antique and collectors' winter fair:** About 500 stands and outdoor pitches at the

Royal Show ground, Stoneleigh, near Kenilworth, Warwickshire. Tues 7am-4pm, £2.

● **Pol plant clinic:** Bring your plants, ailing or otherwise, for professional advice on how to maintain or revive them when they are feeling droopy. Pershore College of Horticulture, Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire (0386 55480). Wed 2-4pm, free.

JUDY FROSHAUG



Rural rhythm: Straw Bear festival at Whitlesay, Cambridgeshire

Farmer's diary: Paul Heiney

Ways to darken our lightness

I COULD swear that the days are getting longer. I am sure that a couple of days ago I was able to cart feed to the sheep at half past four in the afternoon, when the week before I wouldn't have been able to find my way.

In some ways, the dark depths of midwinter have been a disappointment. Perhaps I had read too many Victorian farming tales: I expected my winter routine to begin with grooming carthorses before dawn and be ploughing before the sun was over the hill. I have read accounts of ploughmen seeing their way by the light of the sparks rising from the feet of the horses as iron shoe struck flint. Of course, if you're a lazy son of the late 20th century you stay in bed and miss all the pyrotechnics, as I have done. I am resolving to get up earlier. "Won't matter what time yer get up,"

an old farmer said to me the other day, "we don't have no darkness in the country. Not any more... It's these blasted bright lights they have outside these 'ere pubs. Them throw their lights for miles. Why, folks 'ave even got 'em on houses. Blasted things they are."

I swallowed heavily, and said nothing. I had put up two lights only last week.

I can see what he means, though. Unlike the old-fashioned pearl

bulb, these quartz-halogen lamps are unsuitable in the way they flung their rays of light. The farm next door even has an automatic one which switches itself on when it detects movement. The trouble is that it cannot differentiate between burglars and hedgehogs. Out for an innocent midnight stroll, Miss Tiggywinkle suddenly finds herself spotted as if for the big solo in *Phantom of the Opera*.

There is no comfort in these piercingly bright lights: they suggest hostility, whereas a single glowing filament of the old kind offers comfort. A weary traveller looking for shelter would surely be drawn to a warm, yellow glimmer rather than to a shrieking, electric-blue stab. My new lights may yet come down.

To satisfy my curiosity, and to check on whether darkness does exist in the country, I walked to the top of the farm after dark but before the moon had risen. The night was clear and starlit but, as

the old farmer had predicted, the countryside was ablaze with more of these blasted floodlights, than there were stars in the constellation of Orion. Their light travelled for miles.

I don't mind the lights that illuminate tricky road junctions, but why should I have to endure the glare of a light four miles away which serves only to illuminate somebody's Ford Escort as if it were a work of art? By the time all this wasted light has been added to the intrusive glare of the Sizewell B building site, which already fills our eastern sky, darkness seems a thing of the past.

Does it matter? Strangely, farmers seem to think it does. They have made the remarkable discovery that weed seeds that have lain buried cannot germinate unless they come to the surface and

perceive instant light. Consequently, if you stir up the top of a ploughed field in the dark, the weed seeds which you bring to the surface will not sprout. If you are farming organically, without any weed-killing chemicals, this is an important step forward. Often, much of what is hailed as a new discovery in farming is a re-invention of an old and forgotten practice, but I can find no reference to this one in my library of venerable farming textbooks.

The only story I have come across is of a farmer who was so delighted with a newly invented plough that he took his horses out at midnight to plough by the light of the moon. So, I am planning midnight sorties when the time comes to harrow the land, ready to plant the corn seed. How we shall find our way around the farm is far from certain: the horses may have to be equipped with miners' helmets with lamps. (No, put away the weeds. The harrows would be dragged behind them.)

For the experiment to work, however, we need darkness in the countryside again. Surprisingly the power station builders have already co-operated by dimming their lights a little so as not to confuse migrating birds. I am not quite sure how to put my case to the owners of all those patio floodlights. Still less to the restless, stagelocked hedgehogs who set them off.



Feather report

Ooo,
Ouch,
Ooo...

OF COURSE, we all know how owls manage to hunt in pitch darkness, don't we? They have phenomenal hearing and sight. Rather like Superman, in fact. This is the "supersense" explanation, and one that tends to make us all very happy. Isn't nature strange and wonderful?

A splendid book titled *Birds By Night*, by Graham Martin, it has forced me to think again. I am sorry to lose the supersense explanation in some ways, but the reality of owl life is far more intriguing than a simple miracle.

The most fascinating information in the book concerns tawny owls: the ones that go Ooo-Ooo-Ooo in horror movies. They are Britain's most common owl, and they live in suburban woods as well as deep country. They are, unlike many owls, exclusively creatures of the night, and they live beneath the woodland canopy. Thus, they have chosen the darkest possible environment in which to make a living: the hardest and most complex place to survive by plunging from a height on to rapidly moving objects.

Owls can certainly see and hear better than probably all daylight birds. Their sight and hearing are close to the limits that have been evolved by any bird or mammal. But so are our own. Stand in a wood on a moonless night and you will find the conditions appallingly difficult. But you and the owl are on equal terms when it comes to hearing and seeing.

Owls are capable of hunting blind. They can catch prey on sound alone. But that does not make for a supersense. Owls that have been alarmed on dark nights sometimes fly into branches or tree trunks. Owls break bones more often than daylight birds, which suggests that



Night flight: the tawny owl explodes the myth of animal supersenses

they hit trees rather often. Despite this, tawnies are prospering. How so? An understanding lies in our own experience. A little anthropomorphism is a wondrous thing.

We are talking here of the phenomenon called "cognition", or "acquired knowledge". It is accepted as fact that cognition makes an important contribution to perception. One example given by Mr Martin in his book is that of driving by night. Drivers go pretty well as fast at night as they do by day. Night drivers are doing what tawny owls do: they are surviving by interpreting meagre information in a useful way. The driver works on the assumption that the road will continue in the pattern he understands. In other words, the road is a familiar environment.

Similarly, most people can find their way around their home in minimal light, operating on such cues as a bright reflection from a door handle.

The tawnies have evolved the finest eyes and ears going, but that is a long way short of a supersense. They maximise all they can get from cognition.

If you want to find your way around a house by night, it helps to stay in the same house. Tawnies are resolute stay-at-homes. They will drive away young birds that invade their hunting grounds, but

if the territory next door falls vacant, they will not expand. An unfamiliar territory is no use.

In their own domain, they know all their own hunting perches. They know every flight path from perch to ground, they can use this knowledge to locate prey with precision, and they can return safely to the branch afterwards.

They can hold this information in their heads easily enough: tests on other species have made it clear that birds possess long-term memory of spatial relationships.

All of this goes to show that we should not think of the problems of animal life solely in terms of the freakish, the bizarre, and the most remote from our own experiences. Our own experiences and understanding can, on the contrary, often provide the key to understanding after all, are we not animals too?

SIMON BARNES

● *Birds at Night*, by Graham Martin (T. and A.D. Poyser, £18).

What's about: *Birders* — check inland lakes and reservoirs for windblown grebes and divers. Check gull roosts and rubbish tips for glaucous, Mediterranean and Iceland gulls. *Twitchees* — killdeer in Ballycotton, County Cork. Bonaparte's gull, Plymouth Ho. The snowy owl is still at Wainfleet, Lincolnshire. Details from Bird-line on 0898 700222.

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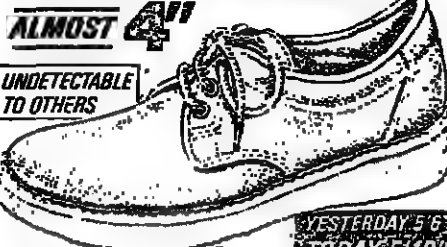
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TELEVISION

Owls not what they seem

I am beginning to think I may not possess sufficient mental stamina for *Twin Peaks* (BBC 2). People tell me I take it too seriously ("enjoy it, laugh a little"), but I answer by clipping them around the head with my home-made "who killed Laura Palmer?" file (which is now, I say with pride, nearly two inches thick). People tell me I have missed the point: that the murder investigation in *Twin Peaks* is a mere McGuffin, and that the cryptic dream-world clues are deliberately bogus. I answer by repeating, in a faraway sing-song voice, a litany of this week's gleanings: "the owls are not what they seem," I say wistfully; and "without chemicals, be points". Ultimately, they shake their heads and leave me alone on the park bench, where I resume my conversation with a small wooden duck.

There were too many detectives on television this week, but I could understand why. It was as though a broadcasting prince had pronounced: "Find me an antidote to *Twin Peaks*: something where the clues lead directly to the criminal, and where I don't have to keep revising my opinion of everybody's character" — and umpteenth liegemen had scurried off, returning later to dump at his feet their indistinguishable booty. *Palmer, Bergerac, Devices and Desires, Waterfront Beat* and *Over My Dead Body* that do you, squire? Something for everyone there.

My own hopes were momentarily raised by the idea of *Spender* (BBC 1)

Lynne Truss reviews the cryptic *Twin Peaks*, *Spender*, and *The Trouble with Agatha Christie*

— until I discovered that it was not, as I had fondly imagined, about murder among the Auden set of the 1930s. Instead, a world-weary undercover Jimmy Nail reluctantly busts drab crimes on his old home patch of Newcastle, and looks dead miserable about it.

Written by Ian La Frenais (who also co-wrote *Lovejoy*), it was generally laconic stuff, and its pervasive mood of not-giving-a-damn extended even to the unapologetic inclusion of hackneyed plot devices. Worth watching again, though — if only for Nail's supremely exaggerated solemnity. It may give some indication of the prevailing dramatic temperature if I say that a guest spot for the now-dead W.H. Auden would live things up considerably.

The trouble with *Spender* was that the crime he solved was not interesting: it was just something unremarkable about stolen cars. Also, there was little action. Much as I do not generally approve of squeal-crash car chases, I still found it unsatisfying that *Spender's* idea of danger was to tail a suspect at a moderate speed for a short distance, with his estranged kids sleeping undisturbed in the back of the car. (Detectives' kids always are estranged, by the way; just as their glamorous ex-wives are always exasperated by the sight of them.)

The other odd thing about *Spender* was its misplaced joshing about culture clash. Having acquired nobby-pamby eating habits in London, *Spender* prefers nouvelle cuisine and camomile tea to the local kippers and pints. In dramatic terms, this was a mistake for two reasons. First, it meant that the best lines ("You call this lamb pink? Pink? A good vet could get this lot back on its feet") went to other people; and second, it made the viewer think that the action had suddenly transferred to London when nobody was looking.

I doubt that Ian La Frenais or Jimmy Nail (who will write future episodes) will really consider introducing W.H. Auden as a character in *Spender*. But he might not be such a useless sidekick as might first appear, since he was responsible for writing one of the best ever essays on crime fiction, in which he said that people who most appreciate the genre (which would include *Twin Peaks* as well as the lacklustre *Spender*) suffer "from a sense of sin".

I kept waiting for somebody to make this point in *The Trouble With Agatha Christie* (LWT), but they never did. A rather stilted studio conversation between Michael Aspel and an audience of well-rehearsed celebrities on the lasting appeal of the Queen of Crime, it was, if anything,

conspicuous for not raising the point that the detective is the Superego which tracks down and banishes the Id. Alas. It might have explained so much about the trouble with *Twin Peaks* — the quantities of Id running about out of control.

The Trouble With Agatha Christie had, in fact, disappointingly little to say about psychological theories — though a publisher from Harper Collins made the point that recent sales shot up by 40 per cent when a gory set of dust-jackets was replaced by an anodyne comfy one. Not content with such insights, however, the programme attempted to eke out the question and answer format ("Now, you are Agatha Christie's grandson; what do you think she would have made of all this?") with a spot of misjudged malarkey about a murder taking place in the studio. An overhead light crashed down on to David Suchet's seat, just as he got up from it; and Sir Peter Ustinov was revealed, in an attitude of death, by means of a studio monitor.

They might have spared themselves the embarrassment: viewers were, I am sure, quite happy pondering the other mysteries on offer, such as "How did Lady Antonia Fraser permit herself to be roped in for this?" "What are Frank Windsor and Susan Penhaligon doing here?" and "Why do people in an audience always look so shy when they realise they are on camera?"

The great excitement in watching *Parnell And The Englishwoman* (BBC 2) was in wondering about the wildlife concealed within the many luxuriant beards. In fact, at one point I was sure I spotted two owls and a hen, four larks and a wren (though the owls were probably not what they seemed). Trevor Eve, resigned to the fact that half his face had been suspended from active duty, put a lot of effort into acting through eyes alone — rather successfully. The only problem was that at the end of the episode, viewers had to shake off the sensation that they had been watching him through a letter-box.

The story of Parnell and Mrs O'Shea (Francesca Annis) is a good one for the classic serial treatment. Hugh Leonard's script is a bit too sparing with exposition, but the dialogue has a significant air — and Leonard seems to have avoided punctiliously the nasty casual anachronisms that so often mar this kind of costume drama. Mrs O'Shea does not say, "I have horrendous news for you", for example, and nobody says, "I'm fine, really".

The acting of the two stars is good — and David Robb as the obnoxious Captain O'Shea is excellent — but some of the lesser Home Rulers all but vanish behind their beards and waistcoats. And nobody seems to be bothering much about an Irish accent (the Irish actors least of all), except when the word Eye-er-land prompts them to remember.



Cherie Lunghi, Nicholas Woodeson and Warren Mitchell in *The Homecoming*

Classical Pinter dispassion

THEATRE
The Homecoming
Comedy

TWENTY-FIVE years have passed since Harold Pinter's *Homecoming* had its premiere in Cardiff. I know because I was there, and well remember scribbling a quick-fire review in a hotel lounge crammed with theatregoers either spluttering, expostulating or too stricken to do much but silently mouth. That did not make life calmer for a cub critic struggling to make instant sense of one of the century's strangest, most fascinating plays. But South Wales's outrage is worth recalling, now that academia has institutionalised *The Homecoming* as that deathly thing, a modern classic.

Thus the task facing Peter Hall, now as then the play's director, is almost more challenging than in 1965. He must switch the electricity back on, and jolt a modern audience into recognising how shocking the play still is. It should not just be an opportunity for the cognoscenti to appreciate charged dialogue, pregnant subtext and other Pinterisms. It is the story of an academic who brings his wife from America to London, only to see her sexually hijacked by his father and

brothers and, with her consent, turned into a blend of housekeeper and breadwinner, surrogate mother and professional whore.

Hall undeniably passes the test. True, there are plenty of loaded silences, but there is no doubting the intensity of the emotions embodied in them. What this family is camouflaging, and not always bothering to camouflage, is lust, greed, envy and anger. If the production did not also manage to be gruesomely funny, it would be intolerable. London, let alone Cardiff, should beware.

The family living room, as in 1965 designed by John Bury, consists of drab grey walls and dull brown furniture. Even the lampshade might have been rescued from the ashes of Hiroshima. And then the rancorous exchanges begin. In Warren Mitchell's performance, the paterfamilias Max half-limps, half-scurries onstage, a bony gnome with sly, squinting eyes and a malevolent grin. Before long, he is barking out resentments that embrace his own increasing age and fading virility, his dead wife, his conventional brother, and his younger sons.

One of these is the pimp Lenny, in Nicholas Woodeson's performance a sly, mocking predator, and the other the aspiring boxer Joey, played by Douglas McFerran as a simpleton most articulate when he is staring at his father

with helpless hatred or at his sister-in-law with yearning. This is the all-male household to which the eldest brother, Teddy, ends by presenting his compliant wife, Ruth.

Here is the play's central problem. Why does this classy couple behave so weirdly? In the first production, Vivien Merchant's Ruth exuded slinky sexuality and *nostalgie de la boue*. Cherie Lunghi, her pale, drawn successor, prefers to emphasise the aura of being a good wife and mother on an American campus, and the relief of being somewhere where she can exercise emotional power, not play games of intellectual let's-pretend. Given her determination, it is not surprising that Greg Hicks's Teddy, always insecure behind the professorial suavity, himself finds a relief in surrender.

So why does the play maintain its hold? Surely because it utterly demystifies the family. God knows what formative brutalities have happened in the past; but what is left here is a herd of human animals, loveless yet frighteningly close, whose joint needs override those of any one member. Who but Pinter could bring such zoological dispassion to the recording of its internal battles for dominance and sex, its power to absorb, overwhelm and destroy?

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE



Searching for dreamworld clues? Andrew Hone, Agent Dale Cooper's self-appointed co-investigator, in *Twin Peaks*

Golden egg on the scales of fringe

THEATRE
Surprised by Love
Duke of Cambridge

THIS 1722 comedy by Marivaux was reportedly one of the author's own favourites. It seems extraordinary that the London premiere of *Le Surpris de l'Amour* should wait until 1991, given by a young company called The Troupe in a pub theatre in Kenilworth Town — pre-empted by performances in Edinburgh.

Despite Voltaire's jeer that Marivaux weighed butterfly's eggs in scales of cobweb, the piece emerges as small, compact and more robust than many of his exquisite but verbose arabesques on love, misunderstanding and pride.

Astrid Hine's English version is natural, literate and free of translationese; while her production sets the action vaguely in our own time to the strains of "Let's Do It" and "Stormy Weather".

The plot is Marivaux's usual fencing match between two people who refuse to acknowledge love but are finally talked into it after cross purposes, soul searching and much Gallic garrulity: the ancestors of the talkative trendies in Eric Rohmer's filmed *Contes Moraux*.

After unhappy love affairs

both Lelio and his servant abjure women; here they resemble the young men in *French Without Tears*. They are excellently played by Michael Charlesworth, with the right blend of discipline and relaxed naturalism, and Robin Cameron, a Scottish harlequin with checks and tartan scarf in place of the traditional diamond-patterned suit.

Inevitably both master and man are drawn to the neighbouring (man-hating) countess and her maid. The heart of the play is a duet between Lelio and the countess, a set of variations on attraction and retreat, pride and pique; a series of gentle proings, at-

tacks and withdrawals, bluff, double bluff and self-deception, until, like Beatrice and Benedick, they are virtually tricked into union by their servants.

The performances are crisp and more stylish than usually found on the fringe. Lillian Evans steers clear of soubrette mannerisms as the maid Columbine, and Harriet Keevil's countess is first-rate — intelligent, puzzled, but finally convincing in reluctant affection. The set, a ruined ivy-clad wall and doorway, echoes the spare elegance of the production which is due to tour Britain in the spring.

MARTIN HOYLE



Julian Forsyth as Fagin

MUSICAL
Oliver!
Sadler's Wells

WITHIN five years of his greatest hit, Lionel Bart's final stage work *Twang!!!* founded with all hands despite its defensive bristle of exclamation marks. *Oliver!* remains a marvel for its time (1960), each song almost insolently apt in style, mood and characterisation. Here are belting ballads, haunting street cries, Fagin's mid-European exoticism ("I'm Reviewing the Situation" anticipates the soliloquies in *Fiddler on the Roof*) and above all the rumbustious euphoria of such company numbers as "Consider Yourself" and "I'd Do Anything". All avoid the formulaic by the sheer vitality of their tunes; the unmistakable knees-up quality of the score's best moments make *Oliver!* the last great English musical.

National Youth Music Theatre specialises in excellent

productions of original works (*The Ragged Child* was particularly memorable), but Bart's Dickensian romp is heaven-sent for a company aged between 10 and 19. The token adult roles number no more than half a dozen; for the rest, choreographer Stuart Hopps, experienced with the infant animals and insects of Covent Garden's *Cunning Little Vixen*, and director Jeremy James Taylor produce a cheerful and polished performance from the young cast, including such accomplished cameos as Richard Johnson's spindly undertaker.

Two adults are press-ganged from the world of opera. Showing sound artistic judgement, Philip Dugan relishes Mr Bumble more than he did Aribert Reimann's *Ghost Sonata*. As Widow Corney, Nuala Willis displays alarming gear changes between baritone chest register and squawky top. Sara Weymouth's Nancy throbs out "As Long as He Needs Me", though the music-hall rollicking of "Oom-pah-pah" finds her breathless. As Bill Sikes

who, like the Mikado, has to whip up menace after an appearance only in Act II, Billy Hartman is young, firm-voiced and brutal. For once Nancy's attraction to the bully seems plausible.

Julian Forsyth's Fagin is also younger and more personable than usual — despite a visual hint of Henry Irving as Stylock. As for the boys, Marcel Bruneau's Oliver is assured rather than pathetic — though he reminds us how hard it is to sing "Where Is Love?". Besides, it is the fate of Oliver to be upstaged by the Artful Dodger. Irfan Ahmad's tremendous Dodger is one of the best: all flashing eyes, swagger and vivacity.

Jason Denvir's set begins, alarmingly, with arches that recall Covent Garden's "time tunnel". Ring, but the central bridge linking two staircases makes an ingeniously flexible background. Excellent choral singing and decent playing from the Wren Orchestra reflect credit on music director Stuart Hutchinson.

MARTIN HOYLE

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

"The Kennel Club was described by an ex-employee at Crufts as: 'More exclusive than the Jockey Club and slightly to the right of the MCC,' which would probably be taken as a compliment by most members."

Canine snobbery, in *The Sunday Times* tomorrow.

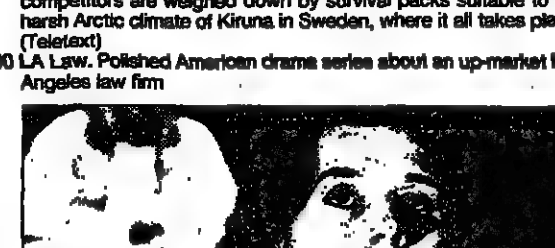
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CHANNEL 4

- 6.00 Comic Book 7.30 News summary 7.35 International Times 8.00 Transworld Sport: International sporting news and interviews
- 9.00 News summary 9.03 Channel 4 Racing: The Morning Line 9.10 Sing and Swing with the jazz stars of the Thirties and Forties
- 9.30 Listening Eye: Signs of Our Times. Some pupils remember the experiences of deaf people. Former pupils remember their schooldays, from the grim Victorian institutions of the early 20th century to the more enlightened schooling of today (r)
- 10.00 Meeting of the Captains of the Wine World. Jancis Robinson continues her series on food and drink by asking where the centre of wine connoisseurship is to be found (r). (Textile)
- 10.30 Film: Andy Hardy Comes Home (1958, b/w). One of a series of low-budget Andy Hardy films produced by MGM. Andy (Mickey Rooney) returns to his home town a rich and successful lawyer thus continuing the saga after a gap of 12 years. He tries to buy factory site and runs into local opposition. Directed by Howard Koch
- 12.00 Silent Silence. The documentary series about animal behaviour takes a look at some of the amazing journeys undertaken by animals (r)
- 12.30 American Football: Fed 42 (r)
- 1.00 Fragile Earth: Earth First. The Daintree rainforest in Australia has been saved from the bulldozer thanks to the protests of concerned environmentalists (r)
- 2.00 Film: The Long Gray Line (1956). Sentimental and over-the-top biopic which celebrates the career of Marty Maher and the merits of the Point Grey race academy. Tyrone Power plays the immigrant who found a home and family within the academy grounds and turned himself into the embodiment of West Point tradition as athletics trainer. Directed by John Ford
- 4.35 The Return of the Prodigal Son. Musings on the nature and history of Finland when one of its sons returns home from exile
- 5.05 British Cinema. Liverpool soap set on a suburban cusp (r). (Textile)
- 6.25 News summary and weather
- 6.30 Right To Reply. A new format for the programme which gives viewers an opportunity to make their feelings felt about programming on all channels. Rory McGrath takes the lead
- 7.00 The World This Week presented by Sheena McDonald. An edition devoted to the Gulf crisis, with analysis of the latest diplomatic moves and reports on the military build-up
- 8.00 Conquer The Arctic II: The Gore-Tex Trophy Part 1. The third of a three-part expedition with sports endurance competitors. Eight teams taken from around the world test each other mentally as they compete in the pull/dog race (sled-pulling), the wadi footfall (off-piste skiing) and the rough terrain race, on skis and down through a boulder-strewn valley. Just for good measure



The artistic importance of being Wilde: Stephen Rea (10.00pm)

0.00 Small Stages: Saint Oscar

● **CHOICE:** The first of five productions from the British fringe theatre festival Terry Eagleton's play about Oscar Wilde, which was performed in London from 1992 to Hampstead. Presented on a single all-purpose set with musical interludes which act as a chorus, *Small Oscar* follows Wilde before, during and after his trial and into exile in Paris. But this is more an exploration of ideas than a formal biography, feeding its starkness with a glitter of Wildean aphorisms with which to seduce English hypocrites ('homosexual behaviour is as English as morris dancing, if somewhat less tedious') and assert the importance of Oscar as artist. Affecting as Derek Nimmo voices, Stephen Rea may not look like Wilde, but his performance is all of a convincing place, brittle, brilliant, mooring, self-indulgent and ultimately sad. The symbolic castration may be harder to take, at least on the British side of the Irish Sea.

1.30 After Dark: The return of Channel 4's experiment in live open-ended debate. Tonight's subject — in light of the situation in the Gulf — is guns and gun-runners. Among those taking part is the

Secrets 9.00 News 9.20 Dollars 10.10
Kerry 1.00 11.40 Mother 1.00 12.50

[illegible]

News Followed by Sunday Drive 2.30
to Echo of the Week 1.35 Fame and
Noted 3.10 Charlie Chase 5.30 To
Where and the Mid 6.00 The Anguish
News 8.15 Missing 6.40 Talkback
Star Trek The Next Generation 8.02

RADIO

Stereo on FM

5.00am Shopping Forecast 6.00
News Breakfast Weather 6.10
The Farming Week 6.50
Prayer for the Day 7.00 8.00
Today, and 7.00 7.30 8.00
6.30 News 7.55, 8.55 Weather
10.00 News 8.05 Sport on 4
9.00 Breakaway: Ken Bruce
presents travel and holiday
news. Richard Vaughan hosts
the news. 8.55, 9.55 Weather
10.00 News; Loose Ends
Conversation with Ned
Garrison, Sandi Tokpet, Arthur
Smith, Robert Elms and Emma
Freud (s)

10.00 News; Talking Politics: Andrew
Marr examines how policies
are developed by the major
parties

10.30 From Our Own Correspondent
10.40 Money Box, with Louise
Dobbing and Vincent Dogliani
10.45pm Just a Minute: Nicholas
Parsons hosts the non-stop
talking show. With Peter
Jones, Wendy Richard, Tim
Rice and Richard Sillage (s)
12.55 Weather

1.00 News

5.00 On the Ropes: John Humphrys
talks to four people who have
weathered storms in their
careers. 2. Court Nick
Tolpelt (r)

5.25 Week Ending: A satirical
review of the week's news (s)
(r) 5.50 Shopping Forecast 6.00
News 6.05 Weather

6.00 News; Sports Round-up
6.25 Citizens; Omnibus edition (s)
7.10 Stop the Week, with Robert
Garrison (s)

7.45 Classic Serial: The Forsyte
Chronicles, Episode 16 of a
29-part dramatisation of John
Galsworthy's saga, narrated by
Cliff Bourque (s)

8.45 Kaleidoscope: Paul Allen talks
to the writer Anthony Minghella
(s) (r)

9.15 Music in Mind: Brian Kay with
a selection of popular
melodies (s)

9.50 Ten To Ten, led by Fr Olier
McEneaney (s) 9.59 Weather

10.00 News

10.15 Fine Tuning
● CHOICE: Although quite a
wag and an above-average
antennutler, George Jacques
is a piano tuner of the old

Michael Aspel (TV, 10.00pm)

Wincombe is joined in
Dorchester, Somerset, by Tony
Banks, MP, Labour party
spokesman on social security;
Sue Garsington, director of the
National Council for Children
parent Families; Auberon
Waugh, editor of the *Literary
Review*; and Emma Nicholson,
MP for the Shipping Forecast
News. Any Answers? 1,500
4111. Listeners can call
Jonathan Dimbleby with their
views on the issues raised in

10.45 Pen to Paper: This week's anthology of new writing is on the subject of time (a)

11.30 **News: Man About Town:** "Babes in Arms" and Gas
surrounding the Earl of
Warminster's family (s)
composers David Lumsdaine
and Nicola LeFanu (s) (r)
And Now, in Colour . . . Stately
Home. The comedy team
returns with more

[illegible]

مكتبة ابن الاصل

Pupils to be penalised for bad spelling in GCSE exams

By DAVID TYLLER, EDUCATION EDITOR

CHILDREN will lose marks for poor spelling in all GCSE examinations this summer, Kenneth Clarke, the education secretary, announced yesterday, even though the move is opposed by examining groups and by his advisers.

Previously, examiners have accepted inaccurate spelling, bad writing and incorrect grammar in all papers except English. Mr Clarke has now ruled that up to 5 per cent of a pupil's marks may be deducted in all subjects for poor spelling.

The School Examinations and Assessment Council, which had been asked to ensure that standards of spelling were taken into account in the marking of all GCSE papers, had told Mr Clarke that this could not be done before 1992. In a strongly-worded letter rejecting that, Mr Clarke said: "I am very disappointed at the council's advice that more cannot be done to secure effective assessment of spelling in the 1991 examinations... The course of action proposed does very little to allay my concerns."

"I do not see why it is impossible for the groups, now, to ask examiners to deduct up to 5 per cent of marks for spelling that is clearly poor."

He suggested that candidates should be penalised for consistently misspelling basic words or frequently-used specialist vocabulary to such an extent that the ability to communicate the understanding of the subject was weakened. The council, he said, should refine the requirements in time for the 1992 examinations.

The council had recommended that from 1994 GCSE papers should carry the warning: "Use good English and present your work clearly using accurate spelling. If you do not do this, you risk losing some of your subject marks. This could mean a lower grade."

Mr Clarke said yesterday "I am

concerned at the decline in the standard of spelling amongst young people and I am anxious that everyone in the world of education should take serious steps to improve those standards. Good spelling is essential to good communication. Good spelling should become one significant measure of a good education."

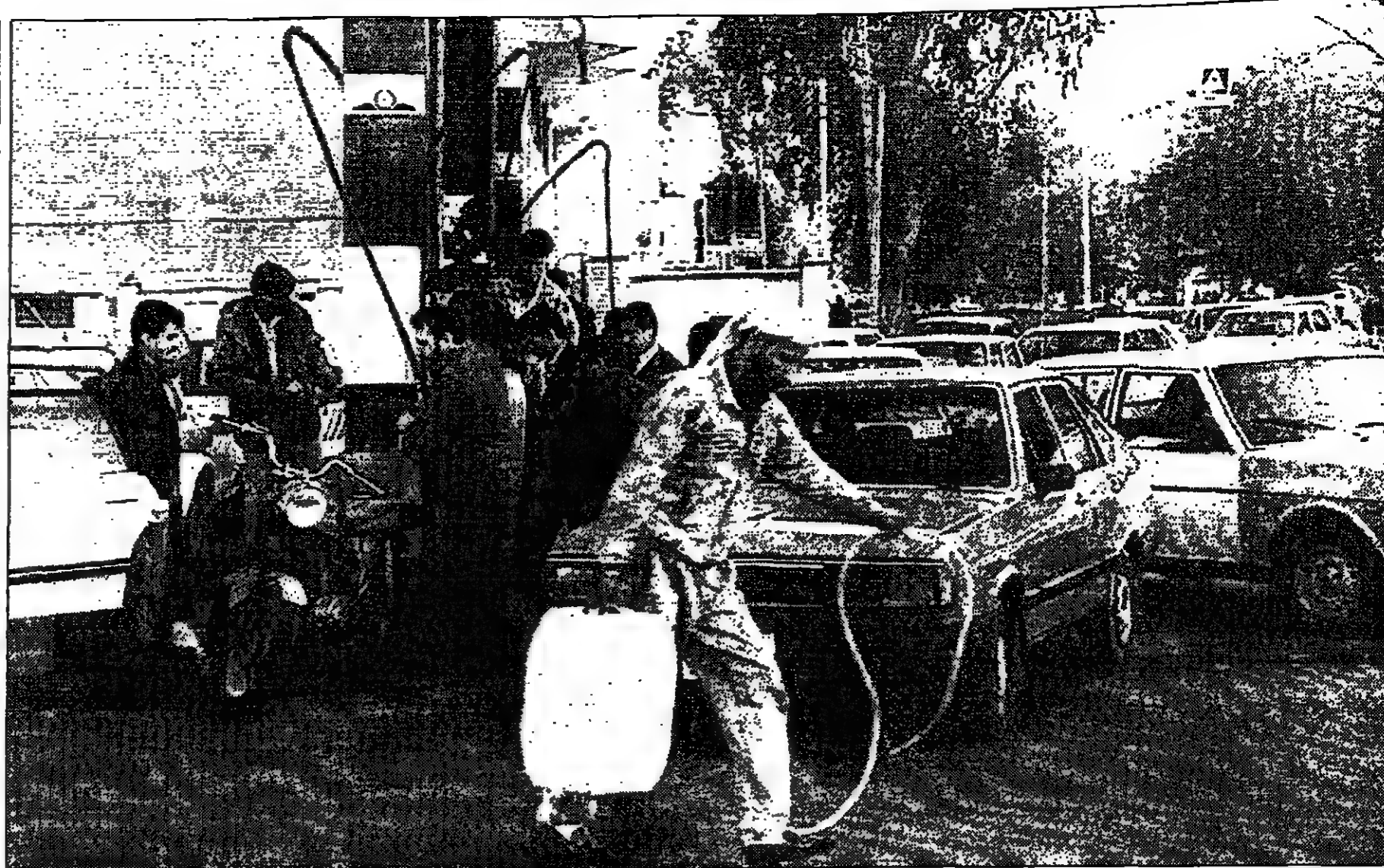
The move to tighten spelling standards follows the report from the school inspectors earlier this week that reading standards in one in five English primary schools are poor. Jack Straw, Labour's education spokesman, said: "As with reading, this announcement is a further admission of years of government complacency and failure. If people misspell to the point where they cannot be properly understood, then this should be taken into account in examinations. Why has the government been tolerating such apparent sloppiness over the past 11 years?"

The examination council said it would consult the examining boards immediately before replying. However, John Edmundson, secretary of the GCSE joint council, which represents the bodies that set the exams, said: "The boards have always been concerned that candidates are treated justly and fairly and are not penalised for the same mistake across the curriculum. The boards will now look to find a way of incorporating the 5 per cent penalty to ensure that candidates are not unfairly treated."

Mr Clarke has also said that the use of computerised spelling checkers in examinations should be banned. The Southern examining group, which was going to allow computer spell-checks to be used in the GCSE this year, will now consider its position.

Mr Clarke said that special arrangements would be allowed for children with difficulties such as dyslexia.

Tory reforms, page 2



Petrol panic: motorists filling every available container with petrol at a Baghdad garage as Iraq, one of the world's biggest oil producers, moved closer to war

Blue moons and red cigars in dawn display

By NICK NUTTALL, TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENT

IF YOU face west in the early hours of tomorrow morning and look just above the horizon, you might see strange blue and red moons and lights resembling large cigars and whizzing bullets.

What you will be seeing will be the biggest lightshow and experiment on earth, or rather in the magnetic fields encircling the earth, where scientists will be exploding clouds of chemicals.

Researchers hope that the experiments, which are being co-ordinated by NASA and the US Air Force through the combined release and radiation effects satellite, will unleash artificial auroras as charged lithium and barium particles trigger radiation flares between the poles.

Andrew Coates, whose team at the Mullard space science laboratory at University College London have experiments on board the satellite, said that some of the heavenly high lights should be visible from Britain.

The Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, said that releases of barium, which turns blue in the sun's ultra violet light, are planned for 0218 and 0258 GMT tomorrow. The second release, and a red lithium release planned for 0705 GMT, might also be seen from Britain.

The best opportunity will, however, be next Wednesday at 0348 GMT when another lithium discharge is planned... beyond the same, blue horizon.

Saddam talks of showdown

Continued from page 1

They believed that there was even a possibility of a delegation headed by Roland Dumas, the French foreign minister. Sources said that the Swiss embassy intended to stay open until at least until January 15.

Remaining Western diplomats and Iraqi sources said they were sceptical about Senator Pérez de Cuellar's chances of reaching any kind of agreement with the Iraqi leader. "The Iraqis have not moved one inch on the question of withdrawal from Kuwait and Saddam's speech today confirms that," one diplomat said. "The new UN plan talks about US forces leaving Saudi Arabia if Iraq leaves Kuwait, but Bush won't buy that."

It appeared from the general mood in the Iraqi capital that the secretary-general's mission had only a small chance of success

unless there were an about-turn in policy from either Baghdad or Washington in the next few days.

Iraqis continued to show how little they know or could expect from the gathering storm. "We are sure that this will be no worse than the eight-year war we fought against Iran," Tariq Zentar, a taxi-driver, said. "We have faith in our leader Saddam Hussein not to lead us down the path of war without being sure that we will achieve victory in the end. We are not afraid of America's bombs we will rely on our supreme faith and our military commanders not to let us down," he said.

Nonetheless, many Iraqis confessed to being frightened about the lack of hard information concerning the size and skill of the UN coalition force facing them.

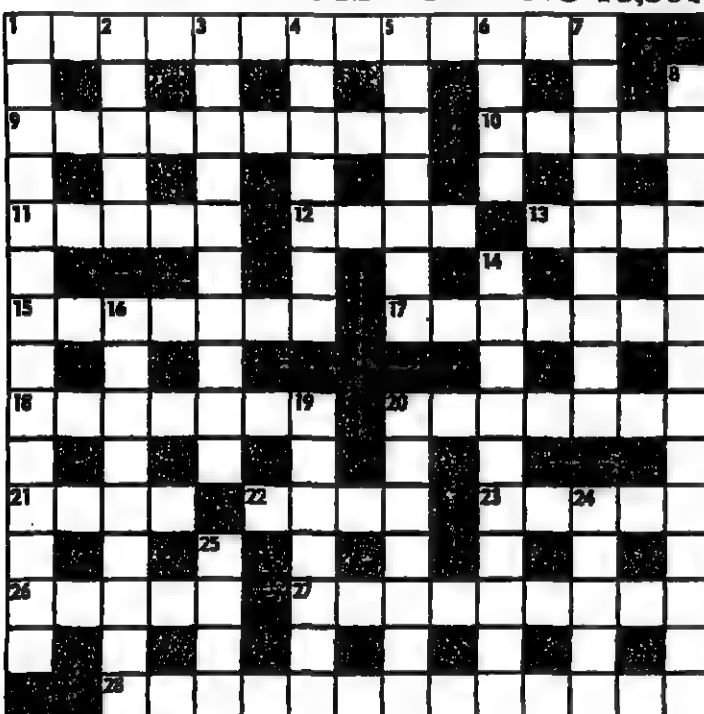
● LONDON: John Major, the prime minister, will meet James Baker, the US Secretary of State, tomorrow to finalise contingency

plans for fighting a war in the Gulf as hopes fade for a peaceful withdrawal of Iraqi troops (Sheila Gunn writes).

Mr Baker will break off his return flight to the United States to discuss the progress of the latest diplomatic initiatives with the prime minister at RAF Alconbury near Mr Major's home. On Monday Mr Major flies to Paris for final talks with President François Mitterrand before the UN deadline of midnight, Kuwaiti time, on January 15. The prime minister will open the Commons debate on Tuesday when MPs and peers are expected to support overwhelmingly military action to force Iraqi troops out of Kuwait.

Mr Major said in Edinburgh yesterday that he was gloomy and depressed by Saddam's refusal to withdraw from Kuwait. "But there is still time for him to do so at the last moment," he added.

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 18,501



- ACROSS**
- The modelled with Tessa and Maud, working under the latter's aegis (6,7).
 - Book about married woman who was given a golden handshake (4,5).
 - Regard the round stern (5).
 - Only light enveloping American mission (5).
 - Approve of love with a girl (4).
 - Flower found on the course (4).
 - Take into account the letters in first down clue (7).
 - It's remarkable how the Spanish stuck around (7).
 - Designations used on pencils with silver case (7).
 - Shakespearean character's hard speech cut (7).
 - About finished (4).
 - Student caught with a dictionary (4).
 - Those funny national characteristics (5).
 - Bury, where the season starts late (5).
 - Belief that's about tax in till (9).
 - Lovers' Pendleton, alias the Crane-fly (5,4,4).

- DOWN**
- To celebrate moving on, take him a gift (4,1,5,2,2).
 - Spanish gentleman upset an Italian lady (5).
 - Gobbledygook from taciturn old boy coming over on plane (5-5).
 - Young Jeremy Fisher produces a story about refugee with nothing (7).
 - Keep up as units assemble (7).
 - A new number to be put up shortly (4).
 - Lorna's accepted the inducement to contribute (2,4,3).
 - Duke on American navy ship is without English money (14).
 - Tailor - he's undermourned (10).
 - Called round on one occasion in vain (9).
 - Peevish Marx has you in first place, not second (7).
 - Spaniard made a cache in the past, concealing some money (7).
 - Swell chap given a welcome (5).
 - Raised the money, we hear (4).

Solution to Puzzle No 18,495

HALVE SQUARE CUT
O I G W A R E C U T
O I G W A R E C U T
M U N G O P A R K U N I T
O E M N H R U A
P A R M A S P O K E S M A N
H N E W M
O C A R I N A N I S I C E
N T A L E S E
E T H I C A L S H A T T E R
H I S T O R I C A L S I G N I T
S I M P A L A G E K U O O S
A S P E R T P E A T
S P A N I S H P O T A T O
S Y M M E T R I C T E M S E

Solution to Puzzle No 18,500

FLAG WAVING B S
A R A U T A M O E B A
A B B I N T H E N R F
I S O M A G A R I N E
E C I G T
O A L R E S O L U T E L Y
I D A A E E R P
S T E A L T H A D A M I T E
N A I T H E E L
W I L L I C H A R I S N I G T
A C C P H A
N A S A M G L I O A O
H A I T I Q U E S H O U R
R E E T E M I E I O
R E E B E H I N D O B A R S

⊕ PARKER 4 prize of a superb Parker Duofold International Fountain Pen, with an 18 carat gold nib and fully guaranteed for the lifetime of the original owner will be given for the first five correct solutions opened next Thursday. Entries should be addressed to: The Times, Saturday Crossword Competition, PO Box 400, Virginia Street, London E1 9DD. The winners and solution will be published next Saturday.

Name/Address.....

WORD-WATCHING

A daily safari through the language jungle. Which of the possible definitions is correct?

By Philip Howard

ABOMASUM

a. An ornithological countess

b. The fourth stomach

c. A worker off

d. A garden plot

e. Electrical Radio Frequency

REFEL

a. To refuse

b. AA underseals

c. An Anglo-Saxon letter

VARVE

a. To joke

b. A layer of clay

c. A labourer's snack

Answers on page 13

THE TIMES WEATHERCALL

For the latest region by region forecast, 24 hours a day dial 0898 500

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Devon & Cornwall 704

Wiltshire & Dorset 705

Bedfordshire & Essex 706

Northamptonshire 707

West Midlands 708

West of Scotland 709

Central Midlands 710

East Midlands 711

Lincolnshire 712

Yorkshire & Lancashire 713

North of Scotland 714

Wales & the Welsh Marches 715

Wales & the Welsh Marches 716

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Wales & the Welsh Marches 744

Wales & the Welsh Marches 745

WEATHER

A bright start for much of the country with scattered showers in many northern and western areas, becoming heavy and thundery at times. Some snow, particularly over Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England. Southern parts of England will be cloudy at first with showery outbreaks of rain. All areas becoming brighter and drier in the afternoon with showers dying out in many eastern and inland areas. Outlook: mainly dry and bright but colder.

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Wales & the Welsh Marches 716

Wales

SPORT 23-28
BUSINESS AND FINANCE 29-34
WEEKEND MONEY 35-40

SUMMARY

Making waves



NICK Gillingham (above), the British swimmer, put a year of stress and injury behind him yesterday and took the bronze medal in the 200 metres breaststroke at the world championships in Perth.

The race was won by Mike Barrowman, of the United States, who broke his own world record with a time of 2min 11.23sec. Second place went to Norbert Rozsa, the Hungarian who beat Adrian Moorhouse in the 100 metres on Monday. Page 28

SKING

Test of nerve

WINNING the world championship is one thing, winning the Hahnenkamm, the great downhill challenge of the season, is another. Brian James previews the race which the skiers themselves regard as the greatest test of their skills. Page 26

RUGBY UNION

Forward step

THE Courage Clubs Championship resumes today with Wayne Shelford, the former All Black, making his first appearance in the competition for Northampton against Leicester. David Hands reports. Page 25

TENNIS

Open and shut



MARY JOE Fernandez (above), the No. 1 seed, was beaten in the quarter-finals of the New South Wales Open yesterday, but it was the news that Pete Sampras is likely to withdraw from the Australian Open, which begins on Monday, that attracted most attention. Page 24

RUGBY LEAGUE

Final hopes

THE Regal Trophy final between Warrington and Bradford Northern will be no more than a formality if the teams play to form. Fortunately for Northern, finals in this competition seldom turn out as expected. Page 25

CRICKET

Tour mystery



NO MEMBER of the England party left for Australia with higher hopes than Robin Smith (above) yet as the tour enters its final phase, he is struggling to find his form. Alan Lee considers the reasons. Page 24

RACING

Desert weight

DAVID Elsworth mounts a strong challenge on the weekend's top prizes in England and Ireland. Desert Orchid attempts to defy top weight of 12 stone in the £45,000 Victor Chandler Handicap Chase at Ascot while Riverhead and Imperial Brush represent the Hampshire trainer in The Ladbrooke, Ireland's richest handicap hurdle. At Leopardstown. Page 26

Bates lashes out at League

By DENNIS SIGBY

KEN Bates, the chairman of Chelsea, yesterday described the Football League's record £105,000 fine on the club for irregular payments to three players as "a travesty of justice".

Before unleashing his attack on the League, Bates said that Chelsea might consider an appeal when they received from the League a statement of the reasons for the decision. He added that the club might call for a judicial review in the High Court into the way the League conducted its affairs.

Bates, who was accompanied by Colin Hutchinson, the managing director, and Peter Taylor, a solicitor, said: "Even on the assumption that the decision was correct, and I stress the word assumption, it was excessive to the extent of being vicious and vindictive."

The fine was announced yesterday after a five-hour enquiry by a three-man commission in Manchester on Thursday. Chelsea were found guilty of breaching League regulation 67(2) through payments to Graham Roberts, Kerry Dixon and Gareth Hall. Two of the offences concerned the club's former defender, Graham Roberts, who was sold to West Bromwich Albion for £200,000 this season.

The League said that Chelsea had been fined £25,000 for a breach of regulation 50, which covers "inducements to sign paid to players or their families". A fine of £75,000 was also imposed for a breach of regulation 67(2) in Roberts's case. This regulation covers players' contract registration and terms. Chelsea were fined £1,500 for breaching regulation 67(2) in respect of Dixon, and £3,500 in respect of Hall.

The charges relating to Roberts were believed to involve irregular payments of about £100,000 following his £450,000 transfer from Glasgow Rangers in August 1988. Dixon is alleged to have received a £10,000 loan in contravention of League rules.

Arthur Sandford, the League chief executive, said the £105,000 fine would deter other clubs from making irregular payments to players. He said: "I am sure this will act as a warning to other clubs not to get involved in this sort of thing."

Sandford sat with Gordon McKers, a Newcastle director, and Ian Scott, the Oldham chairman, on the commission. He said: "Each case is decided on its own merits and the commission decided the size of the fine was appropriate."

In previous cases, clubs have been relegated or even expelled from the League. Swindon Town were demoted two divisions last summer after being found guilty of contravening League regulations on payments - amounting to about £124,000 over five years - but were restored to the second division on appeal.

Swindon had little to say yesterday. "We do not wish to comment on the Chelsea decision as it is considered a matter for the Football League," Peter Day, the Swindon chief executive, said.

Sandford maintained that completely different circumstances surrounded the two cases. "There are many distinguishing features between this case and that of

Swindon," he said. "Demotion was not considered this time."

Bates told a press conference in the trophy room at Stamford Bridge that the only witness the League had was Roberts, Chelsea's former captain and player-coach, whose evidence was oral. "If we are guilty of these allegations, then so is Mr Roberts," Bates said. "I believe he is a tainted witness."

Bates said that Roberts had instituted legal proceedings against Chelsea which were defended by the club. Chelsea, in turn, had a counter-claim that Roberts was allegedly in breach of his contract as player-coach. "I intend to pursue that counter-claim vigorously," Bates said. He alleged that Roberts's lawyers had offered to drop the whole proceedings and forget the matter if the player was given a free transfer.

Bates added: "Some people would suggest, to put it delicately, that this was undue pressure. Since Chelsea decided we had nothing to hide, we ignored that suggestion." He said Chelsea were still convinced they were 100 per cent innocent and he refused suggestions by questioners of any tax implications for the club.

He condemned the disciplinary procedures of the League and said he had been advised in Manchester in December by David Dent, the League secretary, and Bill Fox, the president, that the club should plead guilty. That, he said, was an extraordinary event in advance of a commission which Fox might have been involved in.

Bates also claimed that the League had "done a deal" with Roberts in saying that he would not be charged if he gave evidence. "The only witness was a disaffected former Chelsea employee with a High Court action on both sides," he said.

Bates was highly critical of the League officers and described the whole League set-up as fragmented and archaic, with offices in Lytham St Anne, the chief executive, 150 miles away from Nottingham, and the commercial department in London. He called it a lot of authority without responsibility.

Chelsea intend to press for an independent review committee. Holding up the League handbook, Bates said: "It needs to be thrown out of the window and started with a fresh piece of paper." He said disciplinary procedures should be taken away from the League office and given to an independent authority which did not comprise members of the management committee or anyone attached to a club.

On his own position as a member of the management committee, he said: "I take on board this was doubly embarrassing for both parties." He intended, though, to remain a member of the committee as he felt he could do more good for football from the inside.

● The previous record fine was also imposed on Chelsea - £75,000 after a riot at their ground following a match against Middlesbrough in 1988.

Weekend preview, page 25



Controlled anger: Bates, the Chelsea chairman, holds court at a press conference at Stamford Bridge

Controversial natural organiser with a passion for the game

By CLIVE WHITE

THE word controversial might have been invented with Ken Bates in mind. Ever since he organised a summer tour of Rhodesia by Oldham Athletic at the height of that country's dispute with Britain over sovereignty, he has clashed repeatedly with authority, the media and anyone in football who wanted to put their dukes up.

A fellow director, upon his resignation, once said of Bates: "He believes in a board of two, with one member absent." In his defence, Bates has said: "I am a natural organiser. I don't want to run things. I let end up saying: 'For Christ's sake get out of the way and let me get on with it.'"

Yet despite the dogma and the gruff exterior, he remains a man passionately in love with the game, and in particular Chelsea, determined that neither will be wronged, only over his dead body. "I don't enjoy confrontation," he says, "but I do believe that if

something is worthwhile then you have to battle for it."

If his enemies fear outweigh his friends, many would have to concede that he does argue confidently, more often than not from a position of sound logic. He is respected as much as he is feared. In spite of falling foul of Football League regulations, Bates is one man who Bill Fox, the president of the League, is still pleased to have on his side as a fellow committee member.

"He is one of those people who has plenty of brilliant ideas," Fox said yesterday. "I think he is a valuable member because he provokes thought... I've never found him to be a devious man."

That was not how some people greeted his return to the management committee last June, when he took over Reg Burt's seat following Midwell's relegation. Yet he was voted back, in preference to Ron Noades, of Crystal Palace, by nine votes to three. For a man who, by his own admission,

cannot stand committees - "They are for passing resolutions, not for getting things done" - Bates has spent considerable time on them.

As a management committee member, he was instrumental in devising the Simod Cup, a money-spinner for clubs however much hated by the quality-conscious media, and for campaigning for the return of a more lucrative 22-member first division. On the debit side, he was partly responsible for the £460,000 loss made two years ago by the League's ill-fated centenary celebrations committee, of which he was chairman.

Bates's tough stance on the matter of televised football helped lead to more profitable contracts than the game had ever dreamed of, though he laments the missed opportunity when the League awarded its contract to independent television in 1987. He played a key role in securing for the League the £13.5 million three-year sponsorship by Barclays Bank, and has won lucrative sponsorship deals for Chelsea.

He has yet, though, to win the biggest battle of all, that of safeguarding the future of Stamford Bridge, the home of Chelsea Football Club. His stubborn resistance to the threat against the ground has endeared him to the same supporters whom it was his intention to enclose with electrified fencing in 1985 to prevent "the scum" from reaching the pitch.

It was also on behalf of supporters nationwide that he complained vigorously last May that 35,000 FA Cup final tickets were again going to the "upper crust nobles".

"It is the greatest game in the world," he said recently. "It is also the most frustrating, exasperating, infuriating, desolating game. But there is nothing else."

Golden retriever

Betting and brewing are the traditional boom industries of recession, but maybe the new way forward is to work out your frustrations by blasting away at golf balls at a driving range. That is clearly the strategy thought up by an importer of carnations, a record producer and an interior designer - a triumvirate which will open an up-market driving range, costing £1.3 million, in New Malden, Surrey, next month. You hammer your ball into the far distance, and it will be returned to you via an ingenious system of water pumps. The whole thing sounds positively Danto-esque to me.

A far better system was in use at Saunton, a course in Devon. Wooden benches dotted about the course commemorate the name of Rikki, for Rikki was the system. Rikki was a cocker spaniel who possessed a deep and abiding love of golf balls. His great pleasure in life was to ferret about for lost balls, which he would return, bearing. They were invariably undamaged by his soft mouth. Rikki was in action at Saunton for 13 years and, in that time, he retrieved 25,000 balls. Their re-sale, through the club shop, provided cash for lessons for young golfers, and for the benches.

Silent shuffle

More on sport and the Middle East. Muhammad Ali made a trip to Iraq before Christmas, and returned with 15 hostages. As with every public appearance Ali makes, there was more concern about his physical condition. Some reports said he was communicating through hand signals.

This was bizarrely explained by his PR man, Arthur Morrison, who told the American magazine, Sports Illustrated: "Ali has spoken many times. He chose a vow of silence out of respect for the hostages until he had met with Iraqi officials." Ali's wife, who

SIMON BARNES ON SATURDAY

starting Brian Botta. During her "Springtime Ballet" solo, Veltman III threw a bundle of letters on to the ice: bundles containing reams and reams of demoted sexual ramblings. He was kept at Denver General Hospital on a "mental health hold" and then taken to jail.

Mean streak

Sydney Cricket Ground now employs two specialist policemen at the big one-day games. These are officially termed the Sreaker Police. They are posted one on each side of the ground, and their responsibilities begin and end at spotting incipient streaks. The security measures, even without these two specialists, are awe-inspiring: 107 video cameras cover the ground and are monitored by a staff of five senior coppers. The system cost £350,000 to install.

Banner clanger

It seems AC Milan have been in trouble with the Italian Football Association because of an apparent intervention in Middle East politics. "Welcome back, Gadafi," a banner at San

Shot driver becomes rally's latest victim

THE death of a lorry driver yesterday as he drove through a village controlled by the Malian army brought the number of fatalities since the Paris to Dakar rally started 12 years ago to 27. Charles Cabannes, aged 37, was on his way to Gao in Mali from Tillia in Niger when the shooting occurred, for reasons unknown, at In Kadoouane.

There could have been more casualties when two of the top Citroens in the rally burst into flames early in the 690km-ninth stage but fortunately both drivers - including the former winner, Jacky Ickx, of Belgium - and their co-drivers escaped unhurt. With the first mishap, 99km into the stage, went Ickx's hopes of success. He and his French co-driver, Christian Farin, were second overall some 37 minutes behind the race leader, Ari Vatanen, of Finland, also in a Citroen when they were forced out of their car. It was wrecked. "We had just enough time to get out. It was totally burnt," Ickx said.

The other car driven by the Swedish veteran, Bjorn Waldegaard, who was accompanied by his British co-driver, Fred Gallagher, apparently caught fire an hour later and only 84km further on.

First reports said that in both cases the fire was started by oil spilling from shock absorbers on to the turbo chargers of the cars. Waldegaard and Gallagher, who had been lying fourth overall, were flown by helicopter to Gao after also escaping unhurt.

Ickx's withdrawal allowed the Frenchman, Jean-Pierre Fontenay, driving a Mitsubishi, to move provisionally into second place nearly two hours behind Vatanen.

In the motorcycle category, the Italian, Alessandro De Petr, on a Yamaha, suffered from concussion after a fall only 25km into the stage. De Petr, who scored his third stage victory in this year's race on Thursday to move into fourth place overall, was taken to Tillia by helicopter. Race doctors said his condition was not serious. Another favourite, Jean-Christophe Wagner, fell off his Suzuki and withdrew with a hand injury.

Comment, page 24

War may halt rugby in France

By DAVID HANDS RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

ALBERT Ferrasse, president of the French Rugby Federation, caused a tremor of anxiety in British, and particularly Scottish, rugby circles yesterday when he suggested that war in the Gulf could cause the postponement of the international match between France and Scotland in Paris on January 19.

The deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait is four days earlier and Ferrasse, in a lengthy interview with a French news agency, said: "It's probable that if there is war there will be no sporting events organised. My personal opinion is that I would not be in favour of this match being played."

Bill Hogg, the SRU secretary, who had no inkling of a postponement, said: "We all hope there will be no war but if it does break out there will be immediate consideration at the highest level and no doubt the government would give advice on the matter."

Bob Weighill, secretary of the five nations' committee, who played in nine war-time internationals, found it difficult to imagine the game would not go ahead. But any request for a postponement would be considered by his committee, he said.



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Internal combustion threatens Dakar's future

GAO, Mali

THE tenebre tree is a legend of the desert, the only tree in a vast expanse of rock and sand. It is also the final resting place of Thierry Sabine, the founder of the Paris to Dakar rally. Five years ago, Sabine was killed in a helicopter accident while following his beloved rally and in his will requested that his ashes be scattered under the tenebre tree.

Since then, one of the trucks competing in the Dakar has knocked it down and in its place the locals have erected a metal structure. The spirit of Sabine lives on in the rally, but the loss of the tenebre tree is symbolic of how much has changed. Sabine always intended the Dakar to be a race for amateurs with room for professionals — an adventure, a challenge. But what was for him an opportunity to give something to the African people he held in such affection has been seized by others for different reasons. Like many of those competing in this gruelling event, the Dakar is always in danger of losing its way.

The involvement of major manufacturers presents the most obvious problem. It means a two-tiered event; a competition for the leading teams, an adventure for the rest. But the course is the same for both, the rules no different.

The French and Japanese, in particular, have plunged millions of pounds into something which can have significant commercial consequences in the world's car markets. On the ground, marathon stages spanning two days, with no servicing at the overnight bivouac and a greater emphasis on navigation, have been in-



COMMENT
DAVID CHAPPELL

roduced this year to give the amateurs a supposed fairer chance against the professionals. The result is precisely the opposite. But money is no guarantee of success, as the Camel Ciroen team was sharply reminded yesterday, when the cars of Jacky Ickx and Björn Waldegård reared within an hour of each other. However, making things tougher for all only widens the gap between rich and poor. There can be no more obvious place to head that lesson than Black Africa.

If aid to the rally's poorer relations is misdirected, at least the local populations can benefit from this annual high-speed trek through the French colonies. The Thierry Sabine Organisation (TSO) provides direct assistance each year to the villages with water pumps, medicine and educational books. Only one government, Mauritania's, insists on a payment to the central authority and while there are accusations of gimmickry and bribery to allow the event to pass, it is a tangible attempt to improve conditions.

Contact with the rally means contact with the outside world for those along the 5,000-mile route. It used to be greater, but pressure to make the event safer for locals has forced TSO to move away from the villages and mud huts.

Where the Dakar touches the populace, business, legal and illegal, booms.

The Dakar may not be able to solve problems but it can provide the opportunity to divert or focus attention. It is perhaps no coincidence that the governments of Algeria, Mali and Niger reached an accord with the Tuaregs, the nomadic desert tribesmen, last weekend, a few days before the rally was due to arrive. The persecution, over a generation, of a people whose culture and traditions outdate borders had become increasingly bloody in Mali. The imminent presence of an army of European journalists was well known to both sides and the Tuaregs were prepared to draw attention to their plight.

The fight for all in this part of the world is against the desert. For the *Dakars*, it is the ultimate test. The morality of a multi-million pound rally can be seen in an area of chronic poverty is clearly suspect but the advance of the Sahara is relentless. Year after year, the desert expands.

In twelve years, the rally has cost the lives of 26 people, Africans, competitors and journalists. While that is unacceptable, it was inevitable given the terrain and length of the route, which in 1986 reached 15,000 kilometres. The organisers have



Sand, sand everywhere: man and machine all alone on the Sahara desert road to Dakar

taken measures to prevent further deaths but risk and danger are integral parts of motor sport.

As ever, motorcyclists have borne the brunt of injuries suffered on the 1991 event and a number have already been repatriated. Other wounds have been inflicted by the muggers and

thieves attracted by the prospect of easy pickings. But to ecologists, the wounds inflicted on the desert are a more pressing priority.

In France, where interest in the rally is surpassed only by the Tour de France, environmentalists have called for an end to the rape and pollution of the Sahara.

But the one aspect of Africa which strikes all on the rally, and particularly those whose first experience it is, is the sheer vastness of this desert. Endless tracts of sand and rock, inhospitable and incapable of supporting life. The effect of 400 vehicles passing through once a year

simply emphasises the insignificance. In terms of resources, the amount of fuel used by the competitors might be equivalent to that of three return flights from Britain to Australia.

The Paris to Dakar rally is a much criticised event, a logistical nightmare for the organisers but which brings a great deal to a great many people. Yet the most potent threat to its future lies within it.

Gilbert Sabine, the father of the late Thierry and the president of TSO, said three months ago that the Dakar was "a real human adventure within anyone's reach". "If we do not give the amateurs due consideration, one day our event will become a beat in a world championship with about 60 competitors and a few top teams. I do not want that to happen," he said.

Jean-Marie Balestre, the president of FISA, the world governing body of motor sport, views the Dakar as the Blue Riband of a future world championship of marathon rallies, which would also include Paris-Moscow-Peking and the Australian Safari.

Last month, Sabine and Balestre sat side by side in the library of the Automobile Club de France in Paris at the announcement of the 1991 Dakar route. Balestre did all the talking.

If the Paris to Dakar rally loses its identity, then Gilbert Sabine, the dentist from Le Touquet, may suffer from regret as well as sorrow whenever he thinks of the tenebre tree.

Race report, page 23

TENNIS

Sampras considers withdrawing to avoid serious injury

From Andrew Longmore, Tennis Correspondent, Sydney

IF THE organisers of next week's Australian Open thought their troubles were over when they made the draw yesterday, their sighs of relief proved a little premature. No sooner had they safely gathered in one of the strongest fields in the tournament's history than Pete Sampras, the US Open champion and No. 4 seed, announced that the shin soreness which has been troubling him since his historic victory at Flushing Meadows four months ago might force him to withdraw.

"The shins are still hurting, even when I walk sometimes. So do I play the Australian Open and risk the possibility of a fracture and messing up the rest of my season or take a break and get them right?" Sampras asked after a narrow defeat by Stefan Edberg in an exhibition match in Adelaide. The answer was probably not the one the organisers wanted to hear.

Though the American has played the ATP tour finals and won the Grand Slam Cup without breaking into a canter, he has not had to endure a five-set match since beating Ivan Lendl in the quarter-final of the US Open. Adept as he

has become at minimising his movement on court, he cannot expect such an easy schedule over the next fortnight.

"I didn't come to Australia to not to play," Sampras said. "But I have got to look down the road. I don't want to be permanently injured at the age of 19. It's going to be a tough decision." And one that he says he will make either today or tomorrow.

If he does withdraw, his place would be taken by a lucky loser, a description which aptly summarises Jeremy Bates' fate in recent days. The luck came on Thursday as he slipped into the tournament through the back door, courtesy of John McEnroe's shoulder injury, the loss will probably come on Monday or Tuesday when he has to play Boris Becker in the first round.

Bates was putting a brave face on his task yesterday, but the odds are not auspicious. Bates has lost both his matches against Becker, in the French Open two years ago and at Wimbledon in 1985, and, troubled by an arm injury, he lost to Sandin — son of Fred — Stolle in the first round of

qualifying for the New South Wales Open last weekend. His one hope is that Becker has almost as poor a record this year, only showing signs of his old self in a comprehensive thrashing of Pat Cash yesterday. Cash, though, is not the menace he once was. "All matches are difficult. It's just that some are more difficult than others," the British No. 1 said.

Injuries apart, the seeded semi-finals are Edberg v Lendl and Becker v Sampras in the men's singles. Graf v Sabatini and Seles v Fernandez in the women's. Fernandez has to play Sara Gomer in the first round and her confidence would not have been helped by defeat at the NSW Open yesterday.

The No. 1 seed was beaten 7-5, 6-3 in the quarter-final by Jana Novotna, who plays Barbara Paulus in one semi-final, while Zina Garrison meets Arantxa Sánchez-Vicario, the No. 2 seed, in the other. The men's semi-final line-up is Derrick Rostagno v Guy Forget and Michael Stich v Magnus Gustafsson.

Results, page 25

ATHLETICS

Johnson clone is Cosford attraction

By David Powell, Athletics Correspondent

ANYBODY who enjoys a good impression as much as the original artist should be at RAF Cosford today for the Omron Games. Jason Livingston — "Baby Ben" to the trade — makes his first appearance of the indoor season there, within hours of Ben Johnson's return in Hamilton, Ontario, from a two-year suspension.

Livingston looks like Johnson, has the build that Johnson was renowned and, almost daily, seeks inspira-

tion from his library of 15 Johnson videos.

The haircut is skinhead, the hands play in flight like you-know-who, and, at 5ft 7in with muscles all over, he is Johnson in miniature.

Livingston, now aged 19, came onto the scene last year by finishing second in the world junior championship 100 metres and reaching the senior European indoor 60 metres final.

Still the Johnson posters are

on his bedroom wall. So would it not be something if Livingston, who has Linnor Christie to thank for his nickname, began the year with a 60 metres comparable with the 50 metres run by the 72-hour Olympic champion in Hamilton?

The competition at Cosford may not be as good but the entries include Darren Braithwaite, whose potential was illustrated by his sixth place in the 1990 European championship 100 metres.

Morris sets a fine example before loss of momentum

From Richard Streeton in Karachi

FOR England A to lose their opening fixture yesterday to the Karachi City Cricket Association (KCCA) had little significance for the rest of the tour. Three days after leaving an English winter, a target of 177 was predictably a shade too steep for batsmen neither acclimatised, nor yet tuned to the improvisations required for a 40-over match.

England were given a good foundation by Darren Bicknell and Hugh Morris, the captain, who scored the only fifty in the match and was given the man-of-the-match award. Later, though, the middle order proved unable to raise the run-rate and with seven wickets in hand, 80 were still wanted from the last ten overs.

Soon afterwards, Fairbrother and Thorpe were out in successive overs and KCCA went on to win by 29 runs. It was no coincidence, of course, that Morris, having just spent six weeks in Australian glare and sunshine, was the only man able to drive and pull with such confidence. Bicknell, too, had few problems until he played Sikander, the leg spinner, into the covers and hesitated fatally before attempting a run.

Hussain had also gone before Morris was out in the 29th over. Morris tried to cut Mahboob, a persevering seam bowler, and Jaz Faqih, the only slip and standing well wide, accepted a sharp chance well.

Next Faqih, in the same place, held a reflex catch right-handed to dismiss Fairbrother and he then deceived Thorpe through the air as he bowled his off spin. Ramprakash fell in similar fashion against Sikander.

England had earlier bowled

and fielded with commendable zest. Munton looked the steadiest of the bowlers after Morris chose to field first. In his second and third overs Munton dismissed Amir Hanif and Ghulam Ali, who both struck the ball firmly in an entertaining second-wicket stand. Mujtaba and Tahir Mahmood later led the closing acceleration after KCCA had been restricted to 105 for three in the first 30 overs.

England took some good catches as the last seven wickets fell in seven overs but the runs also kept mounting. Fairbrother finished with three catches and he and Ramprakash were often applauded by the small crowd for their work in the deep. Rhodes held a fine, diving catch to his right in the fifth over to send back Basit Ali but missed two easier chances later.

Munton, who had two for five in his first four overs, finished with three for 28. Pick and Watkin suffered a little as the lower order players swung their bats. Medcalf was able to get some turn and had some good balls among some slower ones. Thorpe, the makeshift bowler, went for 11 and 12 in his first and fourth overs but otherwise fulfilled his role.

Allan Border will lead a Rest of the World side in one-day matches against Ireland in Belfast on July 3 and 4. Glamorgan have been given a £30,000 sponsorship grant by South Glamorgan county council to help unearth local talent. The Glamorgan chairman, Tony Lewis, said that it had been several years since a Welsh youngster last signed for the county. "It would be nice to see that situation change," he added.

SCOREBOARD FROM KARACHI

KCCA	
Ghulam Ali c Ramprakash b Munton	38
Basit Ali c Rhodes b Pick	23
Amir Hanif lbw b Munton	23
Ali Mujtaba c Fairbrother b Thorpe	23
Tahir Mahmood c Watkin	27
Jaz Faqih c Morris b Pick	18
Mujtaba Khan run out	8
Imdadullah c Fairbrother b Pick	1
Imdadullah lbw b Pick	1
Munton	1
Akhtar Ali run out	0
Fairbrother lbw b Pick	4
Extras (b 4, lb 5, nb 4, w 4)	17
Total (40 overs)	177
First 10 overs: 1-25, 2-34, 3-41, 4-43, 5-45, 6-45, 7-45, 8-45, 9-45, 10-45	
BOWLING: Pick 8-1-3-3, Watkin 8-0-30-1, Medcalf 8-0-32-1, Munton 8-1-28-3, Thorpe 8-0-15-2, Jaz Faqih 8-0-31-1, Tahir Mahmood 8-0-18-2, Ali Mujtaba 8-0-18-2	
Karachi City Cricket Association won by 29 runs.	

CRICKET

Taylor's torment takes heavy toll on Smith

From Alan Lee, Cricket Correspondent, Sydney

ROBIN Smith arrived in Australia with the reputation of a batsman whose abrasive style might just shift the balance of the Ashes contest. Three months later, damaged and disorientated, he goes to a country town called Albury this weekend to save his place in the England team.

There have been any number of shortfalls on this tour, most of them relating to thoughtless and inconsistent cricket at a team level. But of the individuals, Smith's failure has stood out if only because it was least expected.

Over Christmas, there were still grounds for his insistence that he was not having a bad tour. In three first-class games outside the internationals, he had scored 395 runs in six innings, of which four were not out.

Since then, however, his form in the games which matter has slipped beyond being simply suspect. His aggregate for the three Tests is 74 runs; in eight World Series Cup matches, he mustered 104. His international average is a little below 14. He cannot go on like this and expect to hold his place, established and respected though he has become.

Prior to the Sydney Test, Smith took his personal decline seriously enough to engage his brother, fellow Hampshire batsman Chris Smith, to coach him in the nets. Most of the points made to him were elementary, to a degree where it could have been feared the younger brother was embarrassing himself.

But it was his credit that he put himself through such a public tutorial and, for a time in the first innings of the Test, it seemed to have borne fruit. Now, however, Smith is all at sea again, never worse than when facing the gently fluffed off spin of Peter Taylor in one-day cricket.

Smith's batting relies a good deal on the bottom hand, hence his proficiency when cutting and pulling. But the bottom hand has become his enemy here as he has begun to thrust the bat at the ball anxiously and prematurely.

In the knowledge of it, he has withdrawn into himself, eliminating shots and compromising his alertness in running between the wickets.

There was something symbolic in seeing him in company with Allan Lamb yesterday, for if Lamb is fit to return to Test duty in Adelaide on January 25, then on form it will be Smith's place he is likely to take. Back in October, few things could have been more improbable to the England management.

World Series competition has come some relief for England. The four-day match against a New South Wales side, which starts in Albury tomorrow, will be only their second first-class game, aside from Tests, since their stay in Tasmania almost two months ago.

Only yesterday, Doug Insole, the chairman of the Test and County Cricket Board's tours committee, was bemoaning the itinerary for this trip, which seemed a nice irony as it was under his approval that it was rubber-stamped. Insole says that a number of concessions were made by Australia if that is the case, still more should have been demanded for England have been playing under a severe handicap, never being allowed to settle into one form of cricket.

The idea, tomorrow, is that Lamb, if fit again after his calf strain, will captain the side and that Gooch will take a rest. This is sound thinking, for the strain of taking responsibility for his beleaguered troops is beginning to show in the captain's daily demeanour.

He is battling close to his best, without quite supplying the

scores to prove it, and after the trauma he has suffered since leaving England it would do him no harm at all to distance himself from the problems for a day or two.

While England try to piece their fragmented game together in rural surroundings, the Sydney Cricket Ground will be packed to its 45,000 capacity again tomorrow night for the first of the World Series finals.

New Zealand's party arrived here only last night, the players having had to wait until literally the last ball of the qualifying tournament had been bowled before knowing their fate.

They gathered in Auckland yesterday morning and John Wright, who has said with regularity that his touring days are over, was wryly delighted to be making one more farewell trip across the Tasman. "I suppose it's fair to say we were the worst team on paper," he conceded. "But we showed there wasn't that much between us and England and we've beaten Australia on two occasions. It's possible to do it again."

The second final is in Melbourne on Tuesday and, if a third is necessary, it will be played on Thursday, also in Melbourne, by which time upwards of 150,000 people would have watched the play-off games. Rather fewer than that, it is suspected, will be on the New South Wales border to see England's battle with dashed morale.

Stuart Law hit 102 not out and Craig McDermott, the former Australian Test fast bowler, an unbeaten 51 as Queensland recovered from 149 for six to reach 326 for seven in their Sheffield Shield match against Western Australia in Perth yesterday.

At the Adelaide Oval, Andrew Hilditch, the opening batsman and another former representative of the Australians at Test level, batted all day for an unbeaten 98 as South Australia struggled to reach 221 for seven against Victoria.

Mike Whitney, the Australian fast bowler who played for Gloucestershire in 1981, has turned down an offer to rejoin the county because of his commitments at a cricket school in Sydney. Gloucestershire will continue to seek a fast bowler as a replacement for Courtney Walsh, who is likely to be touring England with West Indies this summer.



Smith: surprising failure

The ultimate test of endurance in 45 degrees of Arctic frost

By Ken Lawrence

WHEN Tom Wolfe wrote *The Right Stuff*, his best-selling novel about the first American astronauts, in the Seventies, he coined a phrase that was to be used to describe the courage and derring-do heroics of life's grand adventures. You will find it a quite perfect description of two Britons who can be seen on Channel 4 at 8.00pm tonight. Patrick Winterton, once a Royal Marine but now a full-time business management student at Loughborough, and Cormack Hamilton, still a Marine, are certainly "the right stuff" ... men you would always wish to have on your team.

They represent Britain against seven other two-man teams in *Conquer The Arctic*, which one of the Canadian

SPORT ON TELEVISION THE WEEK IN VIEW

contestants describes as "the ultimate test of human endurance". 250 miles inside the Arctic Circle, where the temperature can drop to 45C below zero.

This third staging of the competition comprises seven events: Alpine and Nordic skiing, ice climbing, abseiling, biathlon, husky dog sledding, racing snowmobiles, with a top speed of 70mph, resemble powerboats on skis, and a ten-kilometre mountain marathon involving a race across ice, snow, and rock

over two mountains with a 5,788m summit. These were spread over five days and are encapsulated by Trans World International into two one-hour programmes. The second is a week tonight.

Apart from torturing both mind and muscle in their quest to conquer the opposition, the conditions and themselves, the 16 contestants have to live off Arctic rations, dig holes in the snow to sleep (the discovery of an ice cave behind a frozen waterfall is welcomed as though it were the Hilton), travel in wet clothes, and carry a 20-kilogram (44lb) survival pack.

John Barry, the competition director, who was once the captain commanding the Royal Marines Mountain and Arctic Warfare Cadre, said: "Out there, you survive by your own hand or

you die." Barry devised the contest and calls it a great test of skiing, strength, and determination — and of the participants' sense of humour.

Winterton, aged 29, an Olympic Games and world championship representative at Nordic skiing, said that, although he and Hamilton had done Arctic Marine

training, when the temperature dropped to -22C, they found it chilly to say the least.

He explained that each individual event was no more

difficult than running a marathon, "but, strung together, it becomes a wearing-down process when you are not properly fed or rested. It is the teams who have not looked after themselves properly who are not thinking straight; and thinking through how to tackle each event is vital."

Yet even that was not the worst part of competing and surviving. "Motivation is the hardest thing of all when you are cold and wet and have had to sleep without socks," Winterton said. "There is no hotel bed or an Olympic village — you are left to fend for yourself in conditions that are horrendous."

With the second man's score counting, it is essential for the pairs to work as teams, and that forges bonds which, Winterton says, you do not

get in ordinary life. He and Hamilton were little more than acquaintances when they set out to conquer the Arctic; today they have a friendship that will last a lifetime.

There were several surprises. Locally-hired huskies did not always respond to foreign tongues or go in the direction required. Hamilton, travelling at 60 or 70 miles an hour and leading the downhill race by a distance, could not see, and therefore did not go through, one gate, which led to disqualification from that event; but there were no tantrums or protests.

Throw another log on the fire and enjoy the men Winterton calls "the good guys" — not a prima donna among them". Indeed, 14 men; each made of the right stuff.

An open letter to Kenneth Baker, Home Secretary

From Richard Evans, of The Times racing staff

Dear Mr Baker,

Several Royal Ascots and Cheltenham festivals have passed since you gently ribbed me for buying a share in a racehorse and enquired if I gained a perverse pleasure from throwing good money after bad in costly training fees. As events turned out, your jests were justified. Sunday For Monday never visited the winner's enclosure in a less-than-glorious career over hurdles and fences.

Who would have guessed then that the uncertain wheel of political fortune would have provided you with an interest, albeit indirect, in each and everyone of the 13,500 racehorses now in training in Britain? The political problems caused by prisons, crime, immigration, broadcasting and pornography will have occupied most of your time since your arrival at Queen Anne's Gate. However, the difficulties facing the racing industry and your responsibilities for the Tote and the betting levy system will not have escaped your political antennae.

The causes of the crisis

confronting racing are complex, but they are essentially financial. Unlike almost any other racing nation in the world, in Britain both the government and bookmakers cream off vast sums from racing. Last year around £450 million in betting duty from racing, while bookmakers' annual profits from racing alone have been estimated at £150 million. The result is a sport short of cash, right the way through from prize money for owners. More owners, trainers and jockeys are giving up the unequal struggle against racing's top-sided finances and are quitting the sport they love. The training centres of Newmarket, Malton and Lambourn face a special recession of their own.

As your former prime minister would have said, you don't want to know about problems, you are more interested in hearing about solutions to problems. Well, there is a sporting chance you have at your fingertips a solution to many of racing's difficulties. It would not involve asking the Treasury for a single extra penny, would earn you political Brownie

points (and votes) and could revitalise a sport heading for a crash.

The formula involves gentle but crucial tinkering with racing's structure and helping to restore a sense of balance to its finances.

First, you must free the Horserace Totalisator Board from state control and enable it to flourish under new, commercial management. Pool betting provides racing with a fortune in most countries and could do much better here, even with the opposition of the Big Three bookmakers. Contrary to the claims of Lord Wyatt about the record of the Tote since he took over as chairman 15 years ago, many independent observers point to a poor financial performance in recent years. Declining profit share from an increased turnover is not exactly the height of financial success and would have cost many chairmen of public companies jobs.

You will know of the controversy surrounding Lord Wyatt's re-appointment as chairman for a further two years from next May. The Home Office did not want him to have the job, Mrs

Thatcher overruled such advice and, to rub salt into racing's wound, the announcement was made 24 hours before she said she was resigning as prime minister.

You will also be aware of the contents of the Lloyds Merchant Bank report into the Tote and the hushing up for almost two years of its main conclusions and recommendations. The report was prepared in such a way that any commercially sensitive information could easily have been kept separate from publishable contents. Unnecessary secrecy is not your style, and it is absurd for your officials to say the report is still under consideration, 21 months and two home secretaries after it was delivered to the Home Office. Please, publish it now.

Following your encouraging speech at the Gimcrack dinner, your advisers will present you soon with a paper outlining options for the Tote. Members of the Department of Trade and Industry also have their eyes on the Tote and its potential for raising money for the government. So be careful. It is essential you set the Tote

free, but in a manner which benefits racing. Privatisation in its purest sense, with outside shareholders taking the profits generated by increased betting turnover, would be a dreadful blow to racing. The underlying philosophy of the Lloyds report is sound. The Tote would benefit, racing would be enriched, and you would be rid of an unnecessary encumbrance.

Second, you must tackle the power of the big bookmakers who are unwittingly helping to bleed the sport dry. No-one can blame Ladbrokes, William Hill and Coral for taking advantage of the existing system. But when they threaten the health of the sport from which they make their profits, it is time to act. Just over £41 million of punters' money is expected to go back into racing via the levy in 1991-2 compared with the anticipated £150 million in racing profits for the bookmakers.

The big bookmaking organisations, led by Ladbrokes and the Betting Office Licensees' Association, will howl in protest at any attempt to reduce their take from racing. They will complain they are the victims of

a concerted anti-bookmaker campaign, aided and abetted by mischievous and inaccurate reporting based on ignorant statements by racing's leaders and others. They will even attempt to show you they are hard done by. Smaller, independent bookmakers may face harsher times, not the Big Three.

With your years of experience in Cabinet, you will have been on the receiving end of similarly unsound arguments used as fact. As before, apply a large pinch of salt and use your judgement.

Altering the financial balance of racing to ensure it receives a proper return for its product will not be straightforward, but is crucial if it is to stand any chance of flourishing. Only this week Sir John Sparrow, the new chairman of the Levy Board, highlighted how any changes to the levy system — and therefore the balance between the amount of punters' cash returning to the sport and going to bookmakers — will require fresh legislation. However, the imminent home affairs select committee investigation into betting, including the levy and the Tote, should prove invaluable in pointing you

in the right direction.

In the weeks ahead, you are likely to be bombarded with advice on how to streamline or drastically change racing's ruling infrastructure. One idea includes the formation of a British horseracing commission which would oversee three separate functions: the collection and distribution of levy on betting turnover, the regulatory and policing functions currently carried out by the Jockey Club, and commercial activities. You must decide if such a fundamental restructuring is needed and, if so, whether it is worth risking the inevitable political flak which would be created.

As you ponder racing's gloomy fortunes during your visit to Ascot this afternoon, have one determination: do not fudge the issue. Millions of pounds in Treasury and sports earnings, and thousands of jobs could be saved if you see decisively — and you will go down in racing's history as its saviour.

Best wishes and successful punting.

Richard Evans

SKIING

Downhill quest to conquer Hahnenkamm

FROM BRIAN JAMES IN KITZBUHEL

AS A benchmark of Kitzbühel's famous downhill, at the moment of his victory in Kandahar a week ago, Danny Maher gasped out what translated as: "Wow. That sets me up for the Hahnenkamm." The Swiss added: "Kitzbühel is the one. Win the world championship and you're merely the best downhiller this day. Win Hahnenkamm, and you are the best in the world."

No one gasping at the finish, after yesterday's final run over sparse snow, of a course they say is harder and more dangerous than in memory, seemed ready to disagree. Rob Boyd, of Canada, said: "Anything you have done elsewhere doesn't matter here. But win this and you can win anywhere."

It needed somebody who had long-since got his breath back to exclaim Hahnenkamm's special terrors. Konrad Bartelski, Britain's most successful skier of the Seventies and Eighties, obliged: "I was raised in Kitzbühel and grew up with the Hahnenkamm. I saw my first races as a kid peering over the fence at the start. I could do better got me started as a racer."

The piste changed as speeds grew. Some bumps were flattened; straw bales were applied to keep falls from being fatal. Thus Hudson, of the United States, and Arnesen, of Norway,

who were injured in training this week, have gone home to recuperate and not to be buried.

"But it is still horrifyingly difficult," Bartelski said. "Maher is right, this is the ultimate test, the downhill. No world championship title compares."

Bartelski believes he has sliced Hahnenkamm "a million times, if you count the number of runs I have made, yard by yard, in my mind, but scores of times in reality. The last time was seven years ago, but I can shut my eyes and be standing again in the start-box. It comes back, how lost and lonely you are, waiting to go."

"Crouched to push off, you see only the horizon between your ski-tips, not the track; that's why you're like a church roof from the edge of the box. That's what makes this such a frightener. There's no chance to see. You dip right and left and leap into a void... the Mausoleum [mousetrap]."

All this in the first handful of seconds. The appalling Stadelhorn now looms: "A left-hander leading to a hairpin right. Now a 180-degree swing across ice with a negative camber — in other words, your body is trying to fall away from the mountain. You're trying to shake itself off your shoulders from G-force. Meanwhile, you have to line up for the entrance to a road you can't actually see. Guided now by hope, faith and desperate fear, I have seen slow-motion film of this part: the skier contorts, but you also see the skier's tibia actually flex under the force."

That road is an old wood-cutter's path. "If you have got it right, you are crouched at furious speed. You don't know if you are ahead tenths of a second, or already washed out. Not that it matters. You carry on, no choice — on the Hahnenkamm, there is just the one line."

Bartelski details another 800m traverse, then the Seidlalm: a series of smooth, long bends that cut up horribly and drain energy from skiers trying to keep the line.

Next the Hausberg. "Suddenly you can see Kitzbühel village below you. Now you have 20 seconds of the toughest rock and roll in skiing to endure. It's out of the sun into dense shade, with your skis rattling over ice like corrugated iron, and your mind filled with getting it right for the compression."

You arrive at that "as shot from a cannon", and the shock has your knees dangling like earrings at the side of your head. "Survive that and prepare for the final schuss. Still fractions of time can be picked up, but who's in a fit state to go for them? Weary to death, just keep your skis straight is a triumph when from fingerlings up you are achieving from the mental effort of just hanging on to the hill."

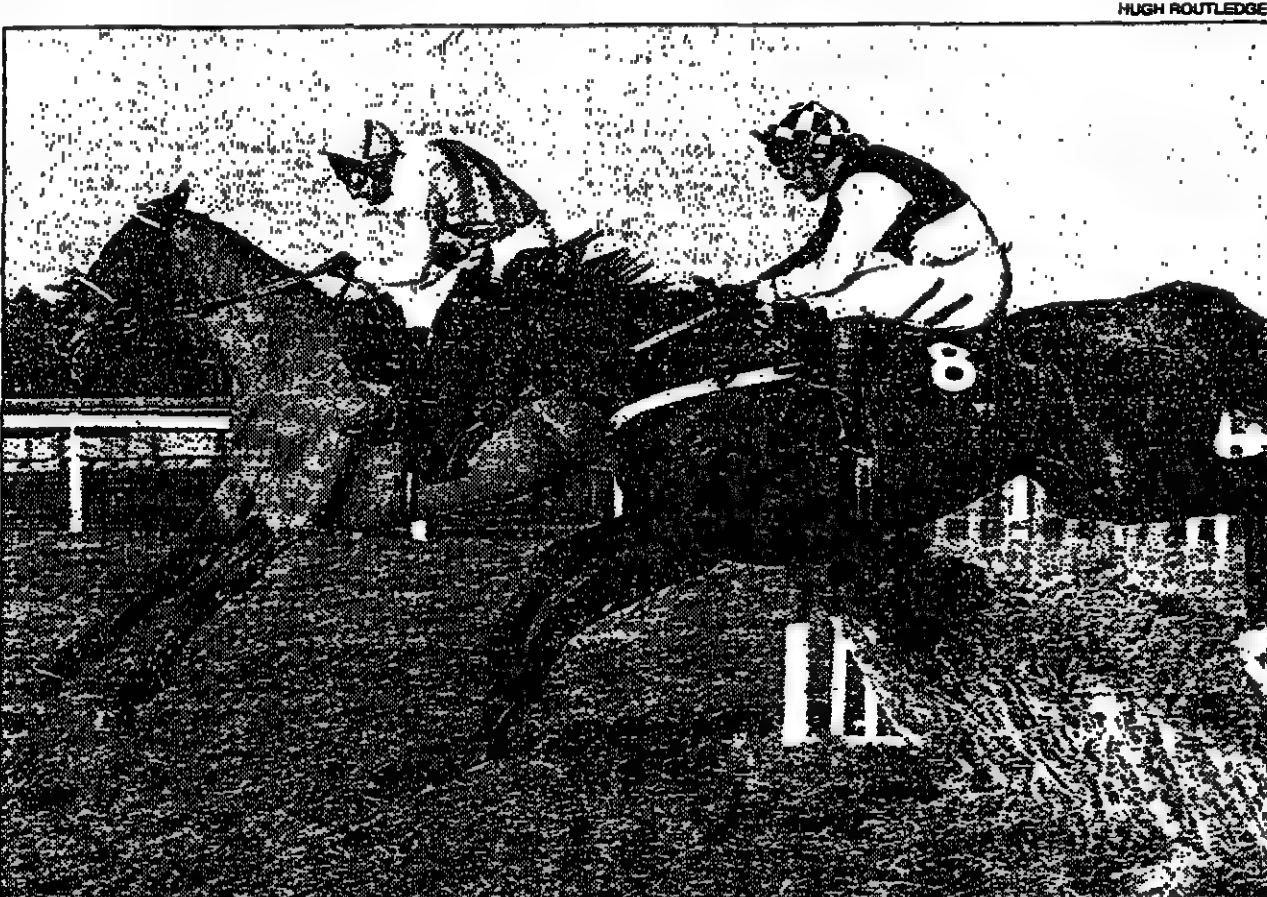
"The other thing about Hahnenkamm, that once they have peeled you out of a fence, you don't know whether you have done good or bad. You can have flowed like a river, yet not got the time. Yet what matters at this moment is you have used up two minutes of your life in a way that stays with you always."

"People — outsiders, that is — used to laugh years ago when the best skiers from places like Iran used to come down to inviolable times. But no racer ever sniggered. Anyone who does the Hahnenkamm in race conditions ought to be given a medal just for pushing forward from the box."

At training's end yesterday, Peter Runggaldier, of Italy, had the best time, leading a cohort of the circus's finest, just as he had before the Kandahar. He came nowhere in that race, emphasising the chasm between exercise and ordeal. Especially on the Hahnenkamm.

LEADERBOARD: 1. P. Runggaldier (10.1m/57.0sec); 2. L. Stock (10.3m/57.2sec); 3. K. Gredin (10.3m/57.4sec); 4. R. Boyd (10.3m/57.5sec); 5. P. Henzler (10.3m/57.6sec); 6. D. Maher (10.3m/57.7sec); 7. B. Palmer (10.3m/57.8sec); 8. P. Orbell (10.3m/57.9sec); 9. M. Gierard (10.3m/58.0sec); 10. J. L. Stock (10.3m/58.1sec).

CALLS cost 33p per min. cheap rate, 44p per min. other times inc. VAT



Charlton Yeoman leads New York Rainbow over the last flight in the Hairy Mary Novices' Hurdle at Ascot yesterday

Uncle Ernie earns Arkle Trophy tilt

By MICHAEL SEELY
RACING CORRESPONDENT

UNCLE Ernie put himself on target for an attempt to give Jimmy Fitzgerald and Tony Sledge their second Arkle Challenge Trophy in four years when he stormed home in the P.M.L. Lightning Novices' Chase at Ascot yesterday.

As a test of ultimate merit, the royal course's grade two chase was somewhat spoilt by the premature departure of the other strongly-fancied northern challenger, Young Benz, at the third jump. But Buck Willow, at 3-1, was the best-backed horse in the race, and Uncle Ernie had no difficulty in quickening four lengths clear of the runner-up.

The cool and professional Mark Dwyer rode his usual thoughtful race on the 2-1 winner, biding his time before moving up to challenge the long-time leader on the run to the second fence from home.

"He has got everything a good horse needs," said Fitzgerald after the former Lynda Ramsden-trained six-year-old had remained undefeated in four runs over fences this season. "He jumps and stays so well and has got plenty of speed. It makes it easier for his jockey to make it easier for his jockey."

In 1988, yesterday's winning owner and trainer captured the Nottinghamshire Novices' Chase and the Arkle with the ill-fated Danish Flight. Now Uncle Ernie is also on route to Cowick Park on February 16 for his Cheltenham preliminary.

After the race, the trainer departed for Dublin where Fragrant Dawn runs in the Ladbrokes at Leopardstown tomorrow. "Fragrant Dawn has improved a lot for his Newbury run, but Wonder Man is going to be a difficult horse to beat," Fitzgerald said.

Jenny Pimm, the trainer of Wonder Man, was also on the best of terms with herself after Ian Lawrence had ridden The A Train to a decisive win over his two opponents in the Bucktail

Conditional Jockeys' Handicap. Earlier this week Mrs Pimm had threatened to withdraw Wonder Man in the event of heavy going. "Apparently they are racing on completely fresh ground but they say the going is soft," she said. "We are going over there on a scouting mission as well. We might return to Leopardstown in February for the Wessex Champion Hurdle."

On an afternoon of high-class performances, the most surprising was put up by Arctic Call when defying top weight of 11st 10lb in the First National Chase for Oliver Sherwood.

"He never put a foot wrong," said the trainer after the 11-year-old, who had jumped his rivals at virtually every fence.

Arctic Call has now earned the right to be entered for the Cheltenham Gold Cup, for which he is 33-1 with Hills. "We'll certainly enter him and probably give him one more run beforehand," said Sherwood.

One thing we have learned after today is that Arctic Call does best when fresh. "Other performances of high merit during the afternoon were put up by Crystal Spirit in the opening Silver Doctor Novices' Hurdle and by Charlton Yeoman, when capturing the Hairy Mary Novices' Hurdle after his stable companion, Fighting Words, had fallen at the second hurdle from home when still in the lead."

Ian Balding trains Crystal Spirit for Paul Mellon. "It would be nice to try and win a Gold Cup for the owner," said the trainer. "We will only give him two more runs this year. He's in the Bishops Cleeve at Cheltenham the same race as Scotch Road. We'll enter him for the Triumph and the Sun Alliance Hurdle at Cheltenham."

Josh Gifford, delighted at Charlton Yeoman's success, said: "Both my horses were well fancied and I just hope they don't have to meet at Cheltenham."

LINGFIELD PARK

Selections by Lingfield
12.55 Mulloof. 1.25 Quick Ransom. 1.55 Able Jet. 2.25 Doubtful. 3.55 Red River Boy. Wizard Magic. 3.55 Red River Boy.

By Thunder
12.55 Mulloof. 1.25 Meritus. 1.55 Able Jet. 2.25 Vanny. 2.55 Boulevard Girl. 3.25 Elmhud. 3.55 Hinzin Vide.

Going: standard. Draw: 5F-1m low numbers best
12.55: 1m 20 (12 runners)
1.25: 1m 20 (12 runners)
1.55: 1m 20 (12 runners)
2.25: 1m 20 (12 runners)
2.55: 1m 20 (12 runners)
3.25: 1m 20 (12 runners)
3.55: 1m 20 (12 runners)

1.25 COWSLIP MAIDEN STAKES (Div 1: 3-Y-O: 22.49S: 1m 20) (11 runners)
1.00: BRUNSWICK BLUE (10.1m/57.0sec) D. Maher 7
2.00: CASTLE MERLIN (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
3.00: FRAGILE EARTH (10.1m/57.2sec) J. Williams 3
4.00: GREGGIE REBEL (10.1m/57.3sec) J. O'Dwyer 7
5.00: HIDE IN THE CLOSET (10.1m/57.4sec) P. Henzler 8
6.00: QUICK RANSOM (10.1m/57.5sec) R. Boyd 9
7.00: TWILIGHT FLAME (10.1m/57.6sec) C. Butler 12
8.00: JULIETTE (10.1m/57.7sec) A. Palmer 13
9.00: JESSIE (10.1m/57.8sec) A. Palmer 13
10.00: WINKETTE (10.1m/57.9sec) P. Henzler 8
11.00: TRICKY TRICK (10.1m/58.0sec) G. Carter 7

1.55: 1m 20 (12 runners)
1.00: BRUNSWICK BLUE (10.1m/57.0sec) D. Maher 7
2.00: CASTLE MERLIN (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
3.00: FRAGILE EARTH (10.1m/57.2sec) J. Williams 3
4.00: GREGGIE REBEL (10.1m/57.3sec) J. O'Dwyer 7
5.00: HIDE IN THE CLOSET (10.1m/57.4sec) P. Henzler 8
6.00: QUICK RANSOM (10.1m/57.5sec) R. Boyd 9
7.00: TWILIGHT FLAME (10.1m/57.6sec) C. Butler 12
8.00: JULIETTE (10.1m/57.7sec) A. Palmer 13
9.00: JESSIE (10.1m/57.8sec) A. Palmer 13
10.00: WINKETTE (10.1m/57.9sec) P. Henzler 8
11.00: TRICKY TRICK (10.1m/58.0sec) G. Carter 7

1.55 BLUEBEL CLAIMING STAKES (3-Y-O: 22.49S: 1m 20) (10 runners)
1.00: VILLAGE PET (10.1m/57.0sec) J. Williams 3
2.00: OAK PARK (10.1m/57.1sec) J. Williams 3
3.00: ABLE JET (10.1m/57.2sec) J. Williams 3
4.00: BRUNSWICK BLUE (10.1m/57.3sec) D. Maher 7
5.00: SOUTH CROFT (10.1m/57.4sec) P. Henzler 8
6.00: GREGGIE REBEL (10.1m/57.5sec) J. O'Dwyer 7
7.00: HIDE IN THE CLOSET (10.1m/57.6sec) P. Henzler 8
8.00: QUICK RANSOM (10.1m/57.7sec) R. Boyd 9
9.00: TWILIGHT FLAME (10.1m/57.8sec) C. Butler 12
10.00: JULIETTE (10.1m/57.9sec) A. Palmer 13

1.55: 1m 20 (12 runners)
1.00: BRUNSWICK BLUE (10.1m/57.0sec) D. Maher 7
2.00: CASTLE MERLIN (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
3.00: FRAGILE EARTH (10.1m/57.2sec) J. Williams 3
4.00: GREGGIE REBEL (10.1m/57.3sec) J. O'Dwyer 7
5.00: HIDE IN THE CLOSET (10.1m/57.4sec) P. Henzler 8
6.00: QUICK RANSOM (10.1m/57.5sec) R. Boyd 9
7.00: TWILIGHT FLAME (10.1m/57.6sec) C. Butler 12
8.00: JULIETTE (10.1m/57.7sec) A. Palmer 13
9.00: JESSIE (10.1m/57.8sec) A. Palmer 13
10.00: WINKETTE (10.1m/57.9sec) P. Henzler 8
11.00: TRICKY TRICK (10.1m/58.0sec) G. Carter 7

1.55: 1m 20 (12 runners)
1.00: BRUNSWICK BLUE (10.1m/57.0sec) D. Maher 7
2.00: CASTLE MERLIN (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
3.00: FRAGILE EARTH (10.1m/57.2sec) J. Williams 3
4.00: GREGGIE REBEL (10.1m/57.3sec) J. O'Dwyer 7
5.00: HIDE IN THE CLOSET (10.1m/57.4sec) P. Henzler 8
6.00: QUICK RANSOM (10.1m/57.5sec) R. Boyd 9
7.00: TWILIGHT FLAME (10.1m/57.6sec) C. Butler 12
8.00: JULIETTE (10.1m/57.7sec) A. Palmer 13
9.00: JESSIE (10.1m/57.8sec) A. Palmer 13
10.00: WINKETTE (10.1m/57.9sec) P. Henzler 8
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4.00: GREGGIE REBEL (10.1m/57.3sec) J. O'Dwyer 7
5.00: HIDE IN THE CLOSET (10.1m/57.4sec) P. Henzler 8
6.00: QUICK RANSOM (10.1m/57.5sec) R. Boyd 9
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9.00: JESSIE (10.1m/57.8sec) A. Palmer 13
10.00: WINKETTE (10.1m/57.9sec) P. Henzler 8
11.00: TRICKY TRICK (10.1m/58.0sec) G. Carter 7

Results from yesterday's four meetings

Ascot

Going: good to soft (chase course); soft (hurdle)
1.25 (2m 40 yds) 1. CRYSTAL SPIRIT (10.1m/57.0sec) D. Maher 7
2.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
3.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
4.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
5.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
6.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
7.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
8.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
9.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
10.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
11.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
12.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1

1.25 (2m 40 yds) 1. CRYSTAL SPIRIT (10.1m/57.0sec) D. Maher 7
2.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
3.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
4.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
5.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
6.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
7.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
8.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
9.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
10.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
11.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
12.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1

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4.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
5.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
6.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
7.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
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5.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
6.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
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3.00 (2m 40 yds) 1. SCOTCH ROAD (10.1m/57.1sec) A. M. M. 1
4.00 (2m 40 yds

Monthly performance figures show value of £100 based on offer to offer prices without income re-invested and ranking within their sector. Yearly figures are based on offer to bid prices with income re-invested. — Unit trust was founded in the past year. 1PCP scheme available. Source: Finstar.

Fund	Bid price	Offer price	1 month per cent	1 year per cent
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[illegible]

Abstract Property Share	48.71	51.39	94.3	17	-
Abstract Financial & Property	46.65	49.94	93.8	16	82.6
Services Use Financial	48.58	51.36	94.5	15	85.0
Brown Shovel Financial	101.4	108.0	92.4	19	83.7
Capital Use Property Share	32.36	34.44	95.0	2	83.1
Cooperation Property Share	22.31	23.72	95.4	8	74.1
Financial Property Share	20.57	22.51	96.1	8	58.1
CU Fin & Property	72.51	77.14	95.4	8	72.5

PRN Property Shares	4712	3012	96.1	1	65	0
PRN Property Share	208.5	211.6	95.0	13	65.2	0
SGT Global Prop Sec Inc	39.84	42.54	95.1	12	82.7	14
Sumitomo-Emerson Prop Share	53.73	57.01	96.2	11	84.0	11
First Samuel Financial	420.2	449.4	95.0	13	77.0	1
First State Fin Financial	36.19	38.45	95.6	7	71.2	5
First State Property Share	46.50	49.40	97.2	3	82.5	18
GAAP Financial Securities	96.02	102.1	95.3	10	69.4	7
GAAP Securities	136.68	145.5	95.4	16	70.7	8
Gran Alliance Worldwide Fin	29.44	31.49	97.1	4	56.2	8

Foreign Fiscal	24.29	25.20	95.8	8	75.4	2
Sector Average/Total	--	--	95.6	19	88.9	18

Overnight Cash	50.52	50.52	100.0	1	--	--
Overnight Money	54.55	54.55	100.0	10	--	--
Central New Cash Acc.	50.68	50.68	100.0	10	--	--

Private Cash	24.46	25.36	100.0	10	..	..
Private Cash	124.46	134.40	100.0	1	111.1	8
Private Cash	58.50	58.50	100.0	1	..	..
Private Cash	52.16	52.16	100.0	1	..	..
Private Cash	109.0	109.0	100.0	1	..	..
Private Cash	81.64	61.64	99.3	16	106.5	4
Private Cash	104.25	104.25	100.0	1	..	..
Private Cash	57.30	56.47	100.0	1	110.4	3
Private Cash	103.44	103.44	100.0	1	112.2	1

Ops. A/c Maximum Inc.	101.73	104.30	100.77	18	--	--
Dryer Coasters Cash Deposit	104.85	104.85	100.00	1	--	--
Pharmaceutical City Reserve	51.68	81.36	90.4	15	98.7	8
***** Savings(Taxes)	--	--	308.1	76	107.8	8

Yearly figures in this section are based on offer to bid prices without income re-invested.

Erna	Lib	C-Quel	13.24	14.47	100.2	69	82.9	70	
Erna	Lib	C-Quel	13.74	14.47	96.6	67	75.2	152	
Erna	Lib	D-Sing	12.00	12.64	100.6	19	70	158	
Erna	Lib	E-Sing	11.70	12.42	100.0	39	66.3	165	
Erna	Lib	Wings	194.01	204.23	99.9	33	73.0	148	
Ally	Autistic	Level	87.29	92.78	97.5	111	84.8	64	
Lib	Curves	Wings	866.0	901.1	96.8	62	87.2	23	
Erna	Lib	Alpine	Wings	82.8	90.5	98.1	49	68.3	161
Erna	Lib	Prism	Wings	130.7	142.9	97.5	116	78.8	111
Lib	Prism	Quel	164.30	179.0	100.5	92	-	-	-

Arcturion	368.5	419.6	96.8	147	70.1	118
Baron's Life Ring	333.6	387.2	96.8	147	77.9	119
Baron's Horse Award 4058	587.31	581.36	96.6	147	93.3	164
Baron's Horse High Seat	310.35	325.69	97.6	111	84.0	55
Beaver's Ring	353.6	382.8	98.2	46	88.2	18
Bear's Ring	209.6	230.7	99.0	50	82.4	74
Bear-Medals Ring	219.6	231.5	99.7	36	81.2	80
Bear's 2nd Ring	292.6	306.6	97.3	127	82.0	82
Bear's 2nd Ring 2	132.7	140.5	99.1	69	80.6	11

[illegible]

Generalization	742.0	721.0	102.4	4	84.4	48
Generalization	863.5	826.0	99.0	58	61.3	90
Generalization	193.3	203.5	99.2	45	86.4	29
Generalization	202.5	213.2	99.2	45	83.4	63
Generalization	387.7	387.0	97.1	135	80.3	101
Generalization	95.2	101.8	97.5	111	79.5	106
Generalization	92.4	87.8	96.7	153	77.9	119
Generalization	245.8	255.7	94.4	174	77.9	143
Generalization	193.7	192.9	94.6	87	65.4	39

Age-Str	Reverend	120.4	132.1	86.0	185	61.1	188
Age-Str	White	156.0	164.7	98.7	65	68.5	27
Age-Str	Performance	147.9	166.7	80.1	163	71.8	184
Concept	Yes Co Wngt	128.5	115.3	58.1	83	85.0	42
Concept	Life Mngt	164.7	172.4	96.2	81	83.8	80
Concept	Life & Love (Balanced)	439.1	452.2	266.8	147	160.0	45
Concept	Life & Love Opportunity	88.2	82.8	50.2	182	69.7	163
Concept	Life & Love Resolute	107.8	112.4	100.7	17	100.8	4
Concept	Life & Love (Provoked Mngt)	158.3	168.3	87.4	120	80.2	102
Concept	Life & Love (Provoked Mngt)	570.2	580.3	301.4	150	158.4	5

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Port	Interlaminar	Uplam	88.4	90.3	25	81.8	87
Port	Mingd		194.7	205	1	97.8	89
Port	Med Mont	Migd	131.6	135.6	97	3	127
Port	Perpetual		129.0	124	6	5	124
Port	Rosinacra	Migd	105.5	115.3	97	6	111
Port	S wavy		92.7	97	98	0	95
Port	Stomach		85.6	91	3	96.3	142
Port	Mingd II		484.4	489.4	96.3	142	75.4
Port	One Mingd		216.9	230.6	98	4	92
Port	Stomach		242.3	232.1	97	8	98

... Mingo	107	7	55.3	99	7	96	107	10
... Samuel Mingo Barnes A	353	4	374	0	97	85	84.6	46
... Mingo	123	1	121	103	1	3	96.6	7
... Mingo Ford J	125	3	133.5	99	7	30	95.7	7
... Mingo	103	5	109	0	96.6	67	81	83
... Global Mingo J	206.8	5	216	97	9	96	89	19
... Life Backward	127	1	126	97	9	180	96.9	26
... Life Opportunity	130	4	137	3	97	120	84.7	48
... Life Security	136	5	140.8	100	8	19	103	8

Merger	213.0	24.2	87.0	138	81.7	68
Acquisition	177.5	186.8	97.2	132	84.0	75
Acquisition	97.9	103.0	97.5	118	74.7	120
Acquisition	344.5	362.6	31.9	127	64.1	126
Acquisition	506.7	532.4	86.7	152	86.2	34
Acquisition	31.70	33.37	98.9	58	82.6	21
Acquisition	37.80	39.75	101.6	7	86.3	33
Acquisition	36.7	40.8	112	12	-	-
Acquisition	83.4	87.8	102.1	5	-	-
Acquisition	100.2	106.5	101.1	12	-	-

Johnson & Johnson Corp	270 7	374 0	98 1	83	92 7	9
Johnson Life Insurance	386 8	98 9	33	89 8	17	2
J.G. Wendt	498 2	513 8	95 8	147	72	124
Krusche Mfg	475 5	550 5	93 3	44	82 5	71
M. Mergel	221 6	233 3	98 0	90	81 1	98
Mergel	48 8	51 3	95 9	186	81 2	90
UK	322 4	338 3	96 5	158	85 5	38
L. Eric Co. Brothers & Son	92 9	97 8	99 1	48	72 3	150
L. Eric Co. Bros. Co.	105 7	111 3	99 1	48	73 6	147

1st Mingo Inc	100.3	126.6	99.1	48	79.3	110
1st Mingo Inc Ser B	97.5	102.6	98.5	74	82.6	68
CCIA Vanguard	464.4	468.8	98.2	61	89.1	88
Correspond	89.6	94.3	101.1	73	78.9	111
Mingo	428.4	514.1	104.0	1	89.3	15
Mingo	303.8	319.8	97.7	105	80.2	102
AM M&M	872.4	918.4	98.0	90	86.5	27
AM Stock Market Mgo	57.9	61.0	97.4	120	82.6	68
1st (Int Fund) Mingo	507.5	534.2	97.4	120	82.5	71
Mingo J. A. Raleigh	221.0	234.8	96.7	163	21.2	155

Person	Life Mngt	38.0	40.0	93.0	178	59.4	168
Person	Life-Savings Mgt	112.0	118.0	93.3	76	81.0	87
Person	Life-ST Mngt	155.0	16.0	95.9	166	76.0	133
Person	Adventurous Mgt	105.3	113.1	95.8	169	72.5	149
Person	Business Mgt	488.1	519.3	94.9	172	74.0	146
Person	Secure Mngt	52.4	98.4	96.8	83	78.8	134
Person	First Star Acc	146.5	155.0	97.8	98	77.9	119
Person	Wingd Acc	197.0	208.0	98.1	99	87.4	23
Person	Cap Int Mgt	45.5	52.2	97.4	120	80.5	100

Can Spar	117.6	124.1	95.5	60	61.3	187
Can Mngl	154.5	162.9	95.1	83	84.6	68
Unltd Mfg	91.9	1034.1	98.8	67	85.6	36
Unltd Mfg	36.5	327.9	97.8	68	86.0	35
Unltd Mfg	84.5	99.5	96.6	157	75.5	136
Unltd Mfg	467.1	431.7	94.6	173	109.1	115
Unltd Mfg	95.8	100.9	95.5	158	76.7	128
Unltd Mfg	219.1	226.3	95.3	78	82.3	75
Unltd Mfg	234.5	239.5	95.8	62	-	-
Unltd Mfg	28.5	32.3	93.2	132	-	170

Energy	287.9	337.4	97.5	127	79.4	108
Energy Mngt	261.6	261.7	97.5	116	64.4	48
Energy Util Trans Mngt	96.0	100.9	96.3	161	70.3	157
Gen Mngt Gth	291.1	295.9	98.9	142	75.3	141
MPN Brk Mngt Gth	166.6	175.4	98.5	74	75.7	136
Appl Growth A	458.1	480.2	100.4	24	85.2	41
Dev Inc Dist	171.2	180.3	99.7	36	82.1	80
Appl Mngt	476.3	501.4	98.2	45	76.6	138
El Lnk Mngt	233.7	246.6	97.0	138	81.4	88
El Lnk Strngt	634.4	646.2	98.0	60	87.0	82

Life threat	215	45.6	59.0	80	62.6	82
Life threat	53	53.9	59	59	87.8	20
Life threat	255.2	274.4	100.9	15	-	-
Life threat	504.9	534.3	97.4	120	83.4	63
Life threat	299.9	315.7	97.7	105	81.9	84
Life threat	164.9	173.6	97.8	99	85.3	40
Life threat	178.6	188.1	97.9	85	84.2	51
Life threat	151.1	159.1	98.8	35	82.3	65
Life threat	151.1	159.1	99.5	41	82.5	71

Mr Safety	160.9	169.4	101.6	7	96.9	5
Prm Mngd	172.4	181.6	97.8	98	82.3	75
Windows Mngd	313.7	330.2	96.9	142	83.9	58
Pr Mngd Clinical Med	125.9	132.6	98.3	76	79.6	107
Int Mngd	108.5	115.2	96.4	90	82.7	67
Secs Business Mngd	269.0	282.1	96.8	142	82.3	75
Secs Baryng Mngd	65.9	90.4	97.8	95	77.5	122
Secs Curious Mngd	95.2	100.2	100.2	28	-	-
Secs Mammogram Mngd	84.3	88.7	98.1	83	75.9	134

Long-Term Mktg	436.3	459.3	97.7	105	83.2	66
All Private Health Assur	404.1	425.5	95.4	42	61.3	69
Advances Mktg	413.2	435.0	98.3	78	81.2	88
Alliance PG Invest A	210.4	92.6	67.8	2.2		
Ldr Contn'd Inv Mktg	276.9	278.9	100.6	19	89.0	17
Ldr Distributor	219.7	231.3	98.3	76	94.9	8
Ldr Mktg	566.6	575.4	98.0	80	80.4	29
All Private Mktg Invest	204.5	276.5	97.7	105	76.2	131

Chers (Ming)	329.9	421.0	96.8	47	76.5	116
Chers (Ming)	225.8	237.5	86.9	59	88.8	112
Hamadaya (Ming)	145.6	153.4	57.3	127	86.4	29
Ming	180.9	180.5	87.1	135	84.1	52
Ming (Ming)	107.6	113.4	97.1	135	84.1	52
Opens (Ming)	63.7	66.2	97.0	138	84.0	55
Life Langham A Plan	188.2	113.8	102.1	5	86.4	29
Life Langham Wop (Ming)	155.8	157.1	101.6	7	81.2	93
Life Ming	91.3	96.1	97.5	118	76.4	128

Provisional Mngd	136.2	143.3	97.9	95	84.0	55
Devan & General Mngd	199.3	209.4	98.1	83	85.6	37

IEA prepares to peg oil price with extra stocks

By GRAHAM SEARJEANT and PETER GUILFORD

WITHIN 24 hours of war breaking out in the Gulf, the International Energy Agency will tell member states to put into effect contingency plans to keep oil prices down by releasing an extra 2.5 million barrels per day to world markets.

The plans will first concentrate on running down stocks, which are well above IEA recommended minimum

levels, but could also involve conservation measures, such as switching from oil-powered electricity to other fuels and cutting speed limits for motorists. Members have 15 days to put their contingency plans into effect.

The planned saving is equal to about 6 per cent of the daily use of oil in the industrial countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development. The few OECD industrial countries that are not members of the IEA have also agreed to put make more supplies available.

Saudi Arabia is producing nearly 8 million barrels per day but only its northern oilfields are regarded as particularly at risk from war.

IEA members are required to hold minimum stocks equal to 90 days normal supply but have enough for about 96 days. Theoretically, the extra supplies called for by the IEA plan could therefore be provided for about three months from running down stocks.

Some conservation measures such as lower car speed limits are likely to be brought in much earlier. Rationing is only a remote possibility.

Oil companies in Britain are required to hold stocks for only 76½ days, because of immediate access to North Sea production. The requirement is enshrined in the 1976 Energy Act, which also empowers the energy department to order the companies to run down stocks.

António Cardoso e Cunha, the EC's energy commissioner, has reassured consumers and the oil markets that the Community is "prepared for the worst" in the event of war, but has given warning that energy ministers could be called to Brussels within 48 hours of hostilities to discuss the release of stocks and longer-term fuel rationing.

Senhor Cardoso e Cunha said there was "cause for concern but not panic". Community stocks contained enough oil for 100 days' worth of consumption.

He said all Community countries had energy rationing plans, enabling them to cut consumption by 10 per cent, just short of the 11 per cent amount they import from Saudi Arabia.

Oil prices stabilised on world markets after the volatility earlier in the week. February Brent crude was marginally lower at \$26.05 per barrel.

Both sterling and the dollar remained strong against the mark as the Gulf war fears were reinforced by worries over Soviet action in Lithuania. The pound opened at DM2.9185, but rose to DM2.9261 at one stage, only 0.8 per cent below its central rate in the exchange-rate mechanism, before relapsing to near its opening level.

Sterling still climbed back above the Danish krone in the ERM, making it only the third weakest currency of the nine.

Salomon Brothers has launched 2 million warrants linked to the August price of Light Sweet crude oil.

VSEL cuts jobs at Trident yard

By PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

VSEL, the shipbuilding and engineering company, yesterday added to the new year job losses by telling its trade unions that almost 550 jobs are to go at its warship yard in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, with more to follow.

The job losses at VSEL, Britain's premier warship manufacturer, are a direct result of the slump in defence industries worldwide after the political changes in eastern Europe, and the ending of the cold war. The prospect of a Gulf war is not altering the projected long-term fall in overall defence spending.

VSEL last August announced 550 redundancies, and warned that a further 1,500 jobs would have to go in the financial year beginning this April. VSEL managers yesterday met leaders of the Confederation of Shipbuilding

and Engineering Unions and gave them details of the first wave of these losses at the yard, which is making the Trident nuclear submarine for the Navy.

The company told union leaders that 546 manual jobs would go between now and the end of July. The company will look for volunteers for redundancy among its 13,000 workforce, which comprises almost half the employees in the town.

VSEL management will also be meeting leaders of the unions representing white-collar employees.

The unions and employees fear that the company intends to cut the workforce by almost half, to about 7,000. Trident is due to be completed in 1995 or 1996, and it is not yet clear whether VSEL will be able to obtain further work.

Albert Martin to close factory

By GILLIAN BOWDITCH

ALBERT Martin, the clothing manufacturer that supplies Marks and Spencer with underwear, leisurewear and sportswear, is closing its factory in Cudworth, South Yorkshire, with the loss of 611 jobs, 425 of them full time.

The factory has made losses for several years and Michael Kidd, the group's chairman, said there was no prospect of its achieving an adequate return soon. He could not say how much the closure and redundancies would cost the group.

Marks and Spencer is Albert Martin's largest customer but none of the M&S business will be affected. It is supplied from the group's Nottinghamshire factories. Albert Martin also supplies British Home Stores.



Kidd: economic decision. Laura Ashley and Littlewoods.

Mr Kidd said the remainder of the group's 5,000 employees would not be affected. The results for 1990, which will be reported in April, are expected to show profits ahead of 1989's £1.61 million.

StormSeal jobs are axed by receivers

By ROSS TIEMAN, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

RECEIVERS endeavouring to save StormSeal, the Manchester double glazing group, have declared 1,623 redundancies at its branches around the country.

Allan Griffiths, of Grant Thornton, the accountant, said he would carry on operating the main business for four more weeks in the hope of securing a buyer. Should he fail, however, more jobs would be lost.

He was optimistic about selling Premier Profiles, the Doncaster, South Yorkshire, plastic extrusions manufacturer, as a going concern.

The StormSeal group, which went into receivership

on January 4, had 3,000 staff nationwide and sales of £100 million last year. It was Britain's third largest double glazing specialist, but the market has been hit by the downturn in spending on household maintenance.

Yesterday's redundancies were heavily concentrated among sales and sales support staff. There were 877 redundancies at StormSeal itself and a further 746 at subsidiaries.

Another 300 jobs are to be lost with the closure of the ITT Cannon factory at St Helens, Merseyside. The company will be concentrating operations at Basingstoke, Hampshire.

Credit jobs cut by Bank of Ireland

By ROSS TIEMAN, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

BANK of Ireland is making redundant 320 of the 440 staff employed at the British Credit Trust, its consumer credit business, by the end of April.

Only four of the 33 branches in England, Wales and Scotland will be retained to oversee the operation over a number of years.

The Dublin bank said in November it was considering whether to sell BCT.

A spokesman said the bank had negotiated with a number of interested parties over recent months without agreement. Consequently, the group had decided that BCT would continue in certain areas of business only and would run down its instalment credit operation.

Hong Kong comics king jailed over £2.2m fraud

From LULU YU IN HONG KONG

TONY WONG, Hong Kong's best-known artist and publisher of kung fu comics, has been jailed for four years for stealing HK\$33 million (£2.2 million) from Jade-Man Holdings, the company he founded.

Mr Wong, aged 39, and his sister, Patricia, aged 27, were convicted on two counts of conspiring to defraud Jade-Man Holdings by making false loans to staff and to a securities firm.

The High Court heard that Mr Wong had used the stolen money partly to fight a takeover of his comic empire

bank account and in nominee companies under his control.

Mr Wong founded a remarkable publishing business by creating lurid and violent tales about Chinese martial arts in the 1970s. His company, which was involved in publishing, newspapers, printing and securities trading, went public in 1986.

After the 1987 stock market crash, Mr Wong came under investigation by the Commercial Crime Bureau, and his dealings became steeped in controversy. In April 1989, the stock exchange suspended

company as collateral for a HK\$140 million loan from two fellow directors, resigned and gave up control temporarily.

Later, his company filed a writ demanding the return of a luxury apartment, a Rolls-Royce, a Porsche, a BMW, two Mercedes-Benz and 14 telephones and pagers, which he had bought on company expenses.

Last year, Mr Wong started fighting back. He was cleared of bribery charges involving two other people. With the help of Ms Sally Au of the

Markheath rises 52%

ANTHONY PHILIPS

By JONATHAN PRYNN



Strategic move: Paul Bobroff turned to Camford

MARKHEATH Securities, the property company that swallowed Camford Engineering, the automotive components maker, in a hostile £70 million takeover bid last year, has reported a 52 per cent advance in pre-tax profits to £6.6 million for the six months to end-September.

The interim figures include a four-and-a-half month contribution from Camford, which accounted for £52 million of the £74.5 million turnover for the half year. Turnover for the first half last year was £14 million.

However, earnings per share fell by 22 per cent to 3.59p because of a £45 million share issue. The interim dividend is maintained at 2p.

Income from investment properties rose 54 per cent to £1.12 million, but did not match the fall in profits from property development, said Paul Bobroff, chief executive. Property development profits are thought to have fallen from more than £2 million in 1989 to about £1 million last year. The company has only three small development projects in progress.

The company has received planning permission to develop a 600,000 sq ft site in Stevenage formerly owned by Camford. Markheath has not decided how to realise value from the site, which Camford valued at £25.5 million during the bid.

Peter Callaghan, Camford's executive deputy chairman, said the subsidiary had performed "bang in line" with the £8 million profit forecast made during the takeover.

Interest costs for the period were £5.5 million and borrowings were about 100 per cent of year-end net assets. Markheath shares rose 4p to 30p.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

South Western and Seaboard on target

INTERIM results from two of the 12 electricity distributors most heavily biased towards the domestic consumer demonstrate the extreme seasonality of those businesses, although both are on course for profits and dividends forecast in the prospectus last year.

Seaboard scraped to a £900,000 pre-tax profit in the half-year to end-September, although George Squair, chairman and chief executive, said electricity distributed was 1.2 per cent higher than in the same period the previous year, despite the difficult economic climate. South Western made £3.7 million pre-tax.

Zetters ahead BBB Design goes into red

ZETTERS Group, the football pools company, lifted pre-tax profits from £364,000 to £372,000 in the six months to end-September despite a slip in turnover from £12 million to £11.4 million. Earnings were 3.4p (3.3p). The interim dividend is maintained at 1.75p.

RMT's losses deepen

PRE-TAX losses have grown at RMT Group, the computer equipment distribution company formerly known as Spectrum Group, from £42,000 to £1.35 million in the year to end-June, affected by exceptional costs. But the company is now trading profitably, says Kenneth Vere Nicoll, the chairman and chief executive.

Turnover grew 9 per cent to £11.9 million. Loss before interest and exceptional charges was £466,000 (£426,000 profit). Rationalisation resulted in an exceptional charge of £444,000 and extraordinary losses of £265,000. Loss per share was 7.04p (0.4p loss). Again, there is no dividend.

Shares fall on LIT sells 40% Embassy loss Jersey stake

EMBASSY Property Group shares fell 5p to 18p as the company unveiled interim pre-tax losses of £875,000 in the six months to September (£854,000 profit). The USM-quoted shares have fallen 60 per cent in the last five days. There is no interim dividend (2p).

LIT Holdings, the specialist financial services group, has sold its 40 per cent stake in Jersey General Group Holdings, an offshore investment management company, to two members of JGGH management, for an initial £500,000. A further £250,000 may also be paid.

SOUTH WESTERN ELECTRICITY plc

INTERIM RESULTS

The results for the half year are entirely as foreshadowed in the Prospectus and the Company remains soundly on track towards the achievement of its Prospectus profit and dividend forecast for the full year. There was a current cost loss before tax for the half year of £9.2 million (a profit of £3.7 million on an historical cost basis).

With a large proportion of the business deriving from domestic electricity sales, the seasonality of the financial performance is accentuated. However, I believe the predominantly domestic customer base makes the Company less vulnerable to economic fluctuations than in many other parts of the country and I look forward to our future with confidence.

William Nicol
Chairman



Results for the six months ended 30 September 1990 were:-

	Current Cost (Unaudited) £m	Historical Cost (Unaudited) £m
TURNOVER	333.6	333.6
OPERATING (LOSS)/PROFIT	(9.5)	4.4
(LOSS)/PROFIT ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAXATION	(9.2)	3.7
Taxation	(0.4)	(0.4)
(LOSS)/PROFIT ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES AFTER TAXATION	(9.6)	3.3
Extraordinary items	(1.5)	(1.5)
(LOSS)/PROFIT ATTRIBUTABLE TO SHAREHOLDERS	(11.1)	1.8

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The Distribution business was profitable for the half year and benefited from an increase in electricity unit throughput of 1.2% on the first six months of the previous year. 7.4% of total throughput represented sales via second tier licensees.

As predicted, the Supply business made a loss during the period. This was due primarily to the seasonality of its sales and the provisions of the electricity purchase contracts. The loss of sales by the Supply business to second tier licensees has not had a material impact on the profitability of the business.

Adverse market conditions for Appliance Retailing have inevitably affected sales but good progress has been made in streamlining this activity. A third superstore has been opened on the outskirts of Bristol and margins have also improved, illustrating the progress of our plans to restore the business to profitability.

In Generation, as indicated in the Prospectus, the Company is considering participation in a number of schemes, particularly the development of a 1725 megawatt combined cycle gas turbine facility on Teesside. South Western Electricity has an option to take a shareholding of approximately 7.7% in the joint venture.

Dividend and Prospects. As explained in the Prospectus, no interim dividend is proposed. The Directors expect to recommend the payment in October 1991 of a single (final) dividend for the year ending 31 March 1991 of 10.57 pence net per ordinary share (approximately £13.0 million in aggregate).

In the absence of unforeseen circumstances, the Company is confident that it will achieve its full year profit and dividend forecast as outlined in the Prospectus.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. Basis of Preparation The interim accounts, which are unaudited, for the six months ended 30 September 1990 have been prepared on the basis of the accounting policies set out in the Prospectus dated 21 November 1989 containing Listing Particulars of South Western Electricity plc and are consistent with the accounting policies adopted for the year ended 31 March 1990.

Results for the six months ended 30 September 1989 have not been presented. The Directors believe that comparison with this prior period would not be meaningful in view of changes during the current year in the commercial and contractual environment of the Company and in its capital structure and regulatory system. The financial information contained in the interim statement does not amount to full accounts within the meaning of Section 240 of the Companies Act 1985.

2. Seasonal Income included within the (loss)/profit before taxation is £2.9 million in respect of the interim dividend (including associated tax credit) receivable from The National Grid Holding plc for the period ended 30 September 1990.

3. Interest Charge The (loss)/profit before tax is net of an interest charge for the period of £3.6 million. The charge reflects the borrowings put in place in order to operate within the new energy purchasing arrangements. The interest charge will be higher in the second half of the year because of the injection in October 1990 of £50 million by way of Government debt as part of the privatisation programme.

4. Taxation Taxation for the six months ended 30 September 1990 has been provided on the basis of the estimated effective tax rate for the year ending 31 March 1991.

	Current Cost	Historical Cost
CCA loss on ordinary activities before taxation		(8.2)
Adjustments:		
Depreciation	11.4	0.2
Cost of sales	2.3	(1.0)
Monetary working capital		3.7
Gearing		
HCA profit on ordinary activities before taxation		

7. Pro Forma Earnings

	Current Cost	Historical Cost
Pro forma loss on ordinary activities after taxation	£12.7m (10.2p)	£1.1m (0.9p)
Pro forma loss per ordinary share		
Pro forma loss per ordinary share has been calculated by dividing pro forma loss after taxation by 123.1 million ordinary shares in issue immediately following flotation as if they had been in issue since 1 April 1990.		
Pro forma loss on ordinary activities after taxation has been calculated by increasing the interest charge by £4.9 million (less £0.5 million tax credit) and, for current cost accounts only, increasing the gearing adjustment by £1.3 million on the basis that the new capital structure had been in place since 1 April 1990.		
Actual earnings per ordinary share have not been presented: the number of shares in issue during the six months ended 30 September 1990 and the actual losses for that period are not considered to be representative of the Company's position following implementation of the new capital structure.		



Portfolio PLATINUM

From your Portfolio Platinum card check your eight share price movements on this page only. Add these prices to your running total for the week and check this against the weekly dividend figure on this page. If it matches this figure, you have won outright or a share of the total weekly prize money stated. If you win, follow the claim procedure on the back of your card. You must always have your card available when claiming. Game rules appear on the back of your card.

No.	Company	Group	Gain or Loss
1	Liberty	Drugs/Stores	
2	Nat Aust Bk	Bank/Discount	
3	Diploma	Industrials A-D	
4	Sater	Industrials S-Z	
5	Helical Bar	Property	
6	Abbot Mead	Paper/Print/Adv	
7	Petroleum	Oil/Gas	
8	Wessex Water	Water	
9	Bbox (J)	Industrials A-D	
10	Steeley	Building/Roads	
11	Wentley	Industrials S-Z	
12	Fabro	Industrials A-D	
13	Am New Z	Bank/Discount	
14	BRF	Motors/Aircraft	
15	Arcliffe	Building/Roads	
16	Eurochem	Chemicals	
17	Oil Search	Oil/Gas	
18	Markheath	Property	
19	Usher Walker	Paper/Print/Adv	
20	THORN EMI (as)	Electricals	
21	Cowan	Building/Roads	
22	Mite Gp	Industrials L-R	
23	Angill (as)	Food	
24	Warner Howard	Industrials S-Z	
25	Mersey Docks	Transport	
26	Micro Focus	Software	
27	Bank of Ireland	Bank/Discount	
28	Nobis Foods (as)	Food	
29	Asquith Water	Water	
30	Logan	Paper/Print/Adv	
31	Speyhawk	Property	
32	Whitbread 'A' (as)	Breweries	
33	Honda Motor	Motors/Aircraft	
34	Westpac	Bank/Discount	
35	Banks (Saxby C)	Food	
36	AAF Inv	Industrials A-D	
37	Br Petroleum (as)	Oil/Gas	
38	Be Land (as)	Property	
39	Can & Life	Food	
40	Red Int (as)	Newspapers/Pub	
41	Wash Water	Water	
42	Pico	Electricals	
43	Kingfisher (as)	Drugs/Stores	

Please take into account any minus signs

Weekly Dividend						
Please make a note of your daily totals for the weekly dividend of £8,000 in today's newspaper.						
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	WEEKLY TOTAL

The £2,000 Portfolio Platinum prize was won yesterday by Mrs Edith Maidment, of Trowbridge, Wiltshire.

BRITISH FUNDS

1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	YTD
1	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
2	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
3	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
4	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
5	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
6	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
7	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
8	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
9	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
10	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100

FIVE TO FIFTEEN YEARS						
1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
11026	53	53	Exp	134	1999	12.3
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11026	53	53	Exp	134	1	

OVER FIFTEEN YEARS							
1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	YTD
1	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
2	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
3	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
4	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
5	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
6	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
7	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
8	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
9	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
10	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100

171% 150%	Treas A 2% 1996	170%	+h
144% 125%	Treas K 2% 2001	153%	
136% 119%	Treas IL 2% 2003	134%	
137% 122%	Treas IL 2% 2009	136%	●
127% 113%	Treas IL 2% 2009	125%	
121% 111%	Treas IL 2% 2011	129%	
108% 97%	Treas IL 2% 2013	108%	●
116% 105%	Treas IL 2% 2018	114%	●
112% 102%	Treas IL 2% 2020	110%	
95% 85	Treas IL 2% 2024	90%	●

1990/91			Price	Grate	Ytd			
High	Low	Company	Bid	Offer	Ch'ng	div	%	P/E
234	173	Abbey National (act)	218	220	-1		8.4	38 11.9
282	126	Allied Irish	128	137	+1			
50	60	Antaresco (Henry)	57	62			3.3	5.5 17.3
303	121	Airt New Z	123	127	+4			-
136	85	Bancamerica	124					-
279	120	Bank of Ireland	142	148	+1			-
194	159	Bank Leontie	18	21				-
357	334	Bank Leontie	318				20.0	57 5.9
144	120	Bank Leontie	144	148	+2		6.8	8.4 8.1

ELECTRICALS							
1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	YTD
1	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
2	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
3	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
4	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
5	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
6	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
7	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
8	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
9	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
10	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
11	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
12	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
13	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
14	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
15	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
16	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
17	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
18	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
19	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
20	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
21	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
22	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
23	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
24	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
25	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
26	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
27	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
28	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
29	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
30	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
31	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
32	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
33	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
34	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
35	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
36	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
37	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
38	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
39	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
40	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
41	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
42	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
43	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
44	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
45	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
46	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
47	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
48	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
49	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
50	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
51	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
52	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
53	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
54	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
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56	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
57	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
58	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
59	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
60	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
61	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
62	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
63	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
64	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
65	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
66	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
67	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
68	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
69	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
70	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
71	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
72	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
73	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
74	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
75	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
76	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
77	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
78	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
79	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
80	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
81	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
82	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
83	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
84	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
85	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
86	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
87	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
88	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
89	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
90	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
91	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
92	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
93	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
94	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
95	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
96	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
97	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
98	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
99	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
100	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100

STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES

Cautious end to account

ACCOUNT DAYS: Dealings began December 31. Dealings ended yesterday. \$Contango day January 14. Settlement day January 21. \$Forward bargains are permitted on two previous business days.

Prices recorded are at market close. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Where one price is quoted, it is a middle price. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices. (as) denotes Alpha Stocks.

1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	YTD
1	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
2	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
3	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
4	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
5	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
6	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
7	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
8	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
9	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
10	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100

Portfolio PLATINUM

© Times Newspapers Limited
WEEKLY DIVIDEND
£8,000
Claims required for +154 points
Claimants should ring 0254-53272

1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	YTD
1	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
2	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
3	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
4	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
5	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
6	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
7	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
8	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
9	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100
10	100	95	British Fund	100	+5	5	100

Chancellor's team faces gathering gloom at Chevening

NORMAN Lamont, the Chancellor, and his top Treasury aides gathered at Chevening, Kent, this weekend to consider the worsened economic outlook and the scope for pulling the economy out of recession in time for the next election.

Estimates on which the highly confidential discussions are based will show that the Treasury is gloomier about the prospects for economic growth than at the time of the autumn statement in November.

Zero growth is now considered likely. John Major, then Chancellor, assumed in the autumn statement that gross domestic product would still manage to grow 0.5 per cent in 1991, after 1 per cent last year, despite the slowdown brought about by the prolonged counter-inflationary squeeze.

Economists from the City and academia have, however, downgraded their growth forecasts sharply since the autumn, with forecasts centring on growth of about 0.1 per cent for 1991, the worst for nine years.

Annual inflation is expected to fall in line with Treasury predictions, dropping to about 5.5 per cent at the end of this year. Next year, the economy is expected to show growth in excess of 2 per cent.

Bill Martin, chief economist at UBS Phillips & Drew, believes the Chancellor is unlikely to risk more than a mild relaxation of the fiscal reins this year.

"The Chancellor's most important policy decision will not come in the Budget. The main potential challenge facing him later this year is whether to devalue sterling," he said.

But Mr Martin, who expects lower inflation than the Treasury at the end of this year and recovery starting in the second half, believes Mr Lamont will probably resist devaluation.

Britain's entry to the exchange-rate mechanism of the European Monetary System, widely regarded as ill timed, has meanwhile limited the government's scope for reducing interest rates quickly to avert deepening recession.

A war in the Gulf would upset the Treasury's latest calculations, with higher oil prices exerting inflationary pressure and possibly reducing growth, if hostilities cause

Hopes for growth are diminishing

as Norman

Lamont and his

aides meet to

discuss the state of

the economy,

Colin Narbrough

reports

serious damage to the region's oilfields.

Though ministers have acknowledged that a technical recession, two successive quarters of economic shrinkage, is possible, they have sought to underline that they do not believe it will be long or severe.

The prime minister said on television last weekend that the recession would not be as bad as in the early Eighties and voiced confidence that the foundation would be laid in 1991 for good growth for the decade.

'The main potential challenge facing the Chancellor later this year is whether to devalue sterling'

James Capel, the broker, expects the Treasury to revise its forecast of 0.5 per cent growth to a 0.5 per cent decline, but without a deep recession. The Treasury believes the recession will be over in the first half of 1991, after which the economy will start to improve.

A sharp rise in the numbers of unemployed, while retail sales, manufacturing output and investment have tumbled, have painted a clear picture of an economy that has contracted since the autumn statement.

The gathering at Chevening is not intended to discuss Budget measures, but is expected to hear that the Treasury is assuming a return to a small budget deficit this year as recession causes tax revenues to fall and boosts spend-

ing on the jobless and social services. Mr Major said last Sunday that short-term deficit was "not a very serious matter". Policy had always been to maintain budget balance in the medium term, not every year.

Neil MacKinnon, chief economist at Yamaichi, the Japanese securities house, not only expects the government to have a borrowing requirement this year, after a small surplus in 1990, but foresees substantial tax cuts to revive the economy in place of the rapid interest rate cuts the disciplines of ERM will prevent. "Easier fiscal policy is the way out of the corner the government has painted itself into," he said.

Some City economists believe the budget surplus could already have disappeared in this fiscal year, instead of showing the £3 billion debt repayment predicted by the Treasury. For 1991-2, the analysts are now looking for a deficit exceeding £7 billion.

Moving the pound to narrower fluctuations bands within the ERM may also be considered at Chevening. This would enhance the credibility of the government's commitment to the parity grid, a commitment that has won increasing acknowledgement in the financial markets since the new year.

Gordon Brown, shadow trade and industry secretary, said last night the Chevening summit must end the government's do-nothing, self-satisfied complacency towards the recession and concentrate on the long-term damage to industry of falling investment and rising unemployment (Sheila Gunn writes).

"Britain now needs a Budget that will take the country out of the deepening recession that industry faces," he told a meeting in his Dunfermline East constituency.

"The Chancellor should know that Britain now has the fastest rising unemployment in Europe as well as the widest trade gap and the highest interest rates. His Budget must take into account the fact that Britain, uniquely in western Europe, has falling investment in the run-up to 1992."

He said that more than 500 companies a week were going bust in a winter of rising bankruptcies, closures and redundancies hitting all regions and all industries.

SFO tries to keep a low profile despite highly public raids

Discretion first in fighting fraud



Barbara Mills: 'We realise we can have a damaging effect on the share price'

Barbara Mills became director of the Serious Fraud Office on September 3 and immediately became controversial in a way that John Wood, her fore-runner, never had to consider.

In less than four months at the helm, Mrs Mills has embarked on three high-profile raids concerning Polly Peck International and Levitt Group, and at the same time incurred the wrath of investors who believe that the SFO, by causing share prices to fluctuate wildly, is too zealous in the performance of its duty.

She said: "I think the SFO generally is being viewed positively by the press. When we make a raid on a company, we, of course, consider the effect on the share price."

"We are very conscious of this and the last thing that we try to do is to be high profile. We attempt to keep our enquiries discreet because we realise that once we become involved, we can have a damaging effect on the share price as well as the individuals."

Unlike Marjorie Mowlem, Labour's spokeswoman on City affairs, Mrs Mills disavows that the International Stock Exchange insider trading unit should be relocated inside the trade department.

"The real question is where matters like insider trading are best investigated and regulated. There is a strong argument for the stock exchange because it is there and can move swiftly."

Mrs Mills countered criticism from those such as Sir John Mont that the SFO unfairly obtains evidence from outside bodies such as the DTI.

She said: "Sir John has made two criticisms in an interview in *The Times*: first, that it is unfair that witnesses questioned by DTI inspectors

must answer questions which may incriminate them, and second, that it is unfair to hand over transcripts made during DTI inspections."

Sir John said that this was done through a confusion in parliament, which he called "an anomalous situation and a not unusual muddle."

Mrs Mills said: "He is quite incorrect to say that it is a muddle; it was done deliberately by parliament."

"As far as the DTI inspectors are concerned, all witnesses have a duty to help them as much as they can. If

they choose not to answer questions, the inspectors can, if they want to, certify before the court that the investigators are being obstructed in their enquiry by the witness. The court may then deal with that witness as if in contempt of court."

"There is nothing new in the handing over of evidence to the prosecuting authorities such as the SFO. You can go back to 1856 for a precedent."

The Director of Public Prosecutions used to have the powers that the SFO has assumed, and, according to

Mrs Mills, always had access to these transcripts.

"We have merely adopted that practice," she said. "Fraud is peculiarly difficult to investigate because you have to get inside a company. The people who run these companies are often very powerful and are able to cover up matters, and often control their employees."

"Our powers at the moment are sufficient for the purposes for which we use them. We have the DTI transcripts, but there is no question of the Inland Revenue passing in-

formation or vice versa, unless there is a prosecution pending.

"The increase in the number of raids of late is really a function of history. In the first two years of the SFO's existence [since 1987], we took over half-investigated matters where raids had already been carried out by the police and had no publicity."

"Now, we are getting matters which we are investigating from scratch. That means we are carrying out the raids and this is attracting publicity because people are unaccustomed to this."

Mrs Mills is quite content with the extent of the SFO's powers but pointed out that if there was one thing the SFO could change, it would be the use of information obtained under section 2 of the Criminal Justice Act.

"It might be worth considering putting our powers of interview on the same footing as those of the DTI. It is inconsistent that we can use transcripts of interviews with potential defendants which the DTI have taken, while we are prohibited from using those we take under section 2."

Mrs Mills, who was called to the Bar 25 years ago, has been interested in fraud for much of that time. She was one of the prosecutors in the first Guinness case, which saw the conviction of Ernest Saunders and three others.

She considers that the economic climate and better detection methods have resulted in more fraud being uncovered, and she is very hard on those who commit fraud.

"There is no such thing as victimless fraud; it is always devastating. Everyone is a victim in a fraud."

ANGELA MACKAY

Cazenove and SBC advise on Hungarian sell-off

By WOLFGANG MÜNCHAU, EUROPEAN BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT

THE Hungarian privatisation programme has taken another step forward with the appointment by the Hungarian State Property Agency of London-based merchant banks to advise on privatisation sales.

Cazenove, the broker, and Swiss Bank Corporation (SBC) have been appointed to advise on the sale of HungarHotels, the country's largest hotel chain. HungarHotels runs more than 40 hotels and is thought to have a value of about \$750 million.

The government tried to sell the chain last year to Quintus, a Swedish group, but the sale was blocked by the

Hungarian supreme court because the price was too low. The government has been accused of trying to offload state-owned companies to foreign buyers cheaply, particularly in connection with Ibusz, the travel company, which was floated in Budapest and Vienna last year.

HungarHotels is also expected to be sold through public flotations, probably in the second half of the year. This option is unique to Hungary and has been rejected by other east European governments because most citizens have insufficient savings to enable them to invest.

HungarHotels is the first large-scale privatisation project since the flotation of Ibusz.

The State Property Agency has also announced the privatisation and the appointment of financial advisers in respect of three other companies. Nomura International has been appointed to advise on the sale of Richter Gedeon Chemicals and Danubius Hotels, while Daiwa Europe will advise Salgotarjani Sikvegyvar, a glass maker.

Daiva, the Japanese securities house, has been appointed to preach the joys of capitalist finance in the

heart of the Soviet Union, and is doing it for nothing. The firm has signed a series of agreements to advise on the creation of a stock exchange and joining the international money markets. The contracts are a significant victory for Daiwa in its drive to become the prime financial force in the Eastern bloc.

Daiwa's Institute of Research has signed a joint venture agreement with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Academy of Science of the USSR. The two will undertake research on development of the Soviet economy.

UNLISTED SECURITIES

1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	1990/91	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%
14	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	14	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	14	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
15	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	15	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	15	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
16	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	16	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	16	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
17	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	17	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	17	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
18	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	18	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	18	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
19	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	19	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	19	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
20	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	20	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	20	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
21	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	21	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	21	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
22	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	22	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	22	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
23	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	23	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	23	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
24	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	24	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	24	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
25	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	25	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	25	100	95	100	95	-5	-5
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57	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	57	100	95	100	95	-5	-5	57	100	95	100	95	-5	-5

The total loss of £227 million in four-and-a-half years by TSB on its investment in Target Group seems careless by any standards. It is an even bigger disaster than that suffered by Target's investors in its Australian unit trust over a similar period.

Neither are happy stories and must make the 1.5 million shareholders and the 330,000 Target investors wonder how the professionals can get it so wrong. Target investors who put £1,000 into the Australian fund five years ago have just £186 to show for it. TSB has lost all its initial investment in Target and could face further losses if the mortgages and other loans made to Target clients turn sour.

The Target property fund is another lamentable story. The managers could not pour their money into the market fast enough when it was rising and then could not pull it out when investors wanted to make withdrawals.

TSB rushed into its purchase of Target in 1986 in preparation for the Financial Services Act. Target, with its up-market

clients, was supposed to give the working class TSB access to this market. But the 1987 crash and the act got in the way. The very clients that Target expected to sell its products to were the sophisticated investors who deserted them for the products of household name companies.

Brokers keen to follow the new law to the letter could not recommend Target products without risking investigation for not giving the best advice.

The flight to quality left Target behind. Brokers anxious to be seen to give appropriate advice opted for the large investment houses topping the performance tables. Target sales, therefore, were largely confined to tied agents, who were not always controlled as well as they ought to have been, bringing the Target name into further disrepute.

There is a tiny jot of comfort for TSB in the fact that it is not alone. Prudential Assurance bought a chain of 500 estate



COMMENT

LINDSAY COOK
WEEKEND MONEY EDITOR

Experts fail to lead by example

agencies at the top of the property market to give it a presence in the high street and the opportunity to sell more policies. In November, the largest insurer announced the agencies were up for sale. The total cost of the foray could be close to £400 million, plus the damage to its investment reputation. Investors and brokers are long likely to remember such catastrophic mistakes.

On a smaller but equally inept scale are the losses faced by two other insurers. Last summer General Accident and Commercial Union each bought a 4.9 per cent stake in the failed Levitt Group for £7.35 million. The broker crashed in December with

debts of almost £40 million. Again the insurance companies had been eager to bolster sales of their products and had bought stakes in the hope they would obtain more business from Levitt clients as a result.

The lesson to be learned in all the cases is that investors cannot be bought wholesale. Nor are they always as easily fooled as the investment houses.

Their faith in the investment experts must have suffered another setback. It has always been the lament of investment salesmen that the public pile into the market lemming-like at the top and then get out at the bottom. This is the example set

to them by the professionals who expect the public to entrust their money to them.

Marked card

Nine million Barclaycard customers should note that it is the computer and the Post Office that always seem to get the blame when things go wrong.

The credit card company must have expected a large number of returned cards and closed accounts last summer when it introduced an £8 annual fee and ought to have introduced a system that could cope with it.

Lloyds Bank had lost 600,000 Access customers earlier in the year so it can hardly have come as a surprise that the much larger Barclaycard would lose more than half a million active accounts. The company generously promised a refund of the annual fee to anyone who closed

their account within a year, but it appears to have forgotten to tell the computer. The machine merely continued to send statements demanding payment of the fee and interest accruing on it for months after it had acknowledged by letter that it had received the card.

But most serious of all is the ease with which an impeccable customer can be threatened with credit blacklisting. It automatically happens after 90 days. The computer writes a little message in the space usually allotted to urging customers to spend more and earn Profile points.

On this occasion the tone is not very different but no customer could afford to ignore the message. The company maintains that as soon as one of its employees had seen details of the account, the mistake would have been sorted out. It also says that two pieces of mail involving one customer went astray.

This is hardly reassuring for its remaining customers, who must worry that a message about a potential default notice might be sent when they are away on holiday or on business.

Revenue pays rent to zone investors

THE board of the Inland Revenue and HM Customs & Excise are to rent an office building in Dundee bought by investors in Scotland's first enterprise zone trust (EZT).

The Greig Middleton Enterprise Zone Trust, launched by Greig Middleton, the broker, gives investors shares in the freehold of the £10.6 million Caledonian House, which is in an enterprise zone redevelopment managed by the Scottish Development Agency.

Higher rate tax payers investing a minimum of £5,000 will be able to claim tax relief



SARA MCCONNELL

at 40 per cent. People can also take out loans to finance up to 100 per cent of the investment through the Royal Bank of Scotland and obtain tax relief at 40 per cent on the interest.

Valerie Marshall, a director of Greig Middleton, said the building had been pre-let to the Inland Revenue and Customs & Excise with upward-only rent reviews every five years. If local rents do not go up, the rent paid to investors stays the same with a nominal £1 added. The yield on the investment depends on the rental income investors receive. Initial rental income per year is £82,711. On a gross investment of £100,000, the annual rental income would be £7,700, a net yield of 7.7 per cent.

Mrs Marshall said: "The EZT is inappropriate for anyone wanting to invest for less than five years. It is possible to come out after five years if more than 51 per cent of the investors agree. There is a deliberate vote on whether to come out after five years, then every year."

SARA MCCONNELL

Insurers prepare to crack down on repeated claims for storm damage

HOMEOWNERS who have just suffered their second or third bout of storm damage should take care before claiming on their insurance policies. While insurance companies will pay the cost of genuine weather damage, however many claims policyholders make, insurers scrutinise frequent claims more carefully.

Philip Dell, underwriting manager with Sun Alliance, said: "If someone has had a lot of claims we might appoint a loss adjuster to investigate more quickly. We have a duty to our other policyholders to investigate those people who have a lot of claims."

Many insurers have already decided to increase premiums for buildings policies this year from £2 to £2.20 for every £1,000 insured, to cover the cost of last winter's storm damage.

Some would like to have raised the figure even higher and companies may refuse to pay claims for what they consider are really routine house repairs.

If they suspect a property requires a lot of repair because



Heavy weather: insurers have been deluged by claims

it has not been properly maintained they can penalise the owner.

As household insurance is an annual policy, companies can refuse to renew when the next premiums fall due. It will

then be difficult to obtain cover from another company because application forms ask if the property has previously been rejected by an insurer.

But refusing insurance is an extreme penalty that is rarely

exercised. More likely they will ask policyholders who make frequent claims to pay an excess, perhaps the first £50, up to £250, of all future claims.

Someone who suffers several burglaries may be asked to fit better locks.

Leslie Hill, personal insurance underwriter for Eagle Star, said: "If someone has a number of storm losses that don't fit the pattern of the major events which everybody in the area suffers, we would probably investigate to see if there was a particular problem."

When companies are examining a claim, they take other factors into account as well as the number of claims.

Mr Hill said: "With any claims we look at the length of time we have had the policy and the claims experience over the period. Someone may have one bad year after ten years without a claim. We look at the cost of the claim against the premiums we have taken in."

MARGARET DIBBEN

Banks and societies court Tessa's hand

PROVIDERS of less than competitive tax exempt special savings accounts (Tessas) have had to take remedial action this week to stop money being withdrawn and deposited with rivals. A number of savings institutions that had held back from offering a Tessa have also launched in the face of competition.

Abbey National will increase its Tessa rate from 13.8 per cent to 15 per cent. Midland Bank will increase its rate by 1 per cent to 14.5 per cent on Monday, as will Firstdirect, its telephone-banking subsidiary.

Barclays increased its interest rate by 1 per cent to 14 per cent on Thursday and guaranteed to maintain it until at least March. Tyndall has increased its rate from 13.65 per cent to 14.06 per cent.

The Lambeth Building Society has extended its 14 per cent rate to all balances and will pay a bonus at the end of the fifth year of up to 10 per cent of the balance at the end of the first year.

The Yorkshire Building Society launched its Tessa on

Wednesday offering a rate of 14.75 per cent with a minimum balance of £100. Transfers require 90 days' notice.

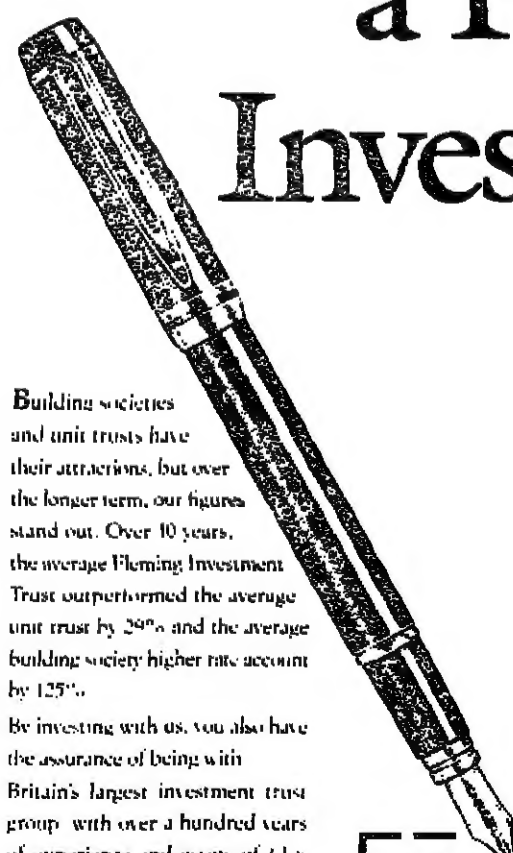
Confederation Bank has launched a fixed rate Tessa, paying 11.5 per cent for the full five years. Alliance Trust will accept fixed rate deposits setting the rates when applications are received.

The demand for the tax-free accounts, which allow up to £9,000 to be invested over five years, has continued unabated, with more providers reporting they have run out of Tessa forms or have a backlog of applications to process.

The Building Societies Association has said that people wanting to open a Tessa may have difficulty without proper identification. Birth certificates and credit cards are not accepted by themselves for proof of identity. Customers are advised to take a valid "full" passport, an armed forces identity card, a signed identity card bearing a photograph from a known employer or a full UK driving licence.

LINDSAY COOK

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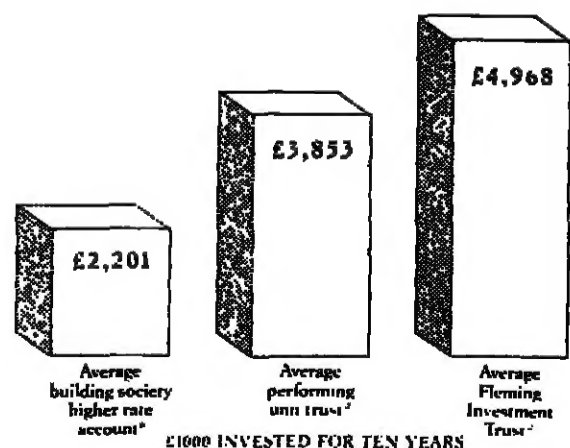


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THE INVESTMENT HOUSE

سكول من الامم

Buddha of design who remains the eternal optimist

By GILLIAN BOWDITCH
—BUSINESS—
PROFILE
Terence Conran

Buying Christmas presents for most middle aged men is difficult, buying them for Sir Terence Conran must be nigh impossible. What do you give a multi-millionaire who owns the nicest shop in town?

"Some of my family bought me presents from The Conran Shop for Christmas," says an amused Sir Terence. "But the best present was from my housekeeper who bought me plain white underpants and dark blue socks."

But what delighted him most was a card with the inscription: "The retentive memory may be a good thing but the ability to forget is the true token of greatness." It is a motto he has taken to heart. There is a good deal of 1990 that he does not care to remember.

Last year he failed in two of his most ambitious projects. He left Storehouse, the stores group he built into one of Britain's biggest retail empires with Habitat, BHS, Mothercare, Richards Shops and Blazer. And Butlers Wharf, his development on the bank of the Thames, went into receivership.

These experiences have saddened him. There is nothing he hates more than incomplete projects, "unfinished dreams," as he calls them. But, an eternal optimist with an inability to sit doing nothing for two minutes, he is neither bitter nor depressed. Although approaching 60 he is not prepared to be written off. It irritates him immensely to see himself portrayed as one of the Nineties disaster stories.

"I don't mind criticism, heaven knows I wouldn't still be here if I did, but I have suffered an awful lot recently through inaccurate information and implication." The two common misconceptions that annoy him most are: that he was forced to leave Storehouse and that he has lost all his money in Butlers Wharf. He says he chose to leave Storehouse after being deeply undermined by Michael Julien, the chief executive, and he has lost about £4 million of his own money in Butlers Wharf.

He has made and lost vast sums over the years and recently realised £23.5 million from the sale of a 5 per cent stake in Storehouse. "Personal wealth is something which has been of total disinterest to me. Do I regret having been worth £200 million at one stage and being worth only a quarter of that today? Of course not, a quarter of that is far too much in any case. I'm embarrassed to sit here with money in the bank, I truly am. I'd much rather be using it to do something."

Those who know him well agree that it is not money that motivates him. His wife, Caroline Conran says: "He likes making things happen. He likes change but not in the things around him. He is enormously energetic and hard working and has great stamina. He has always enjoyed having lots of projects on the go at once. He doesn't like things to be in a mess and he is very fond of having his own way."

Conran gets away with being a mini-dictator at times because of his ability to charm people, and because of his achievements. At the Storehouse annual meeting in 1989 he turned a pack of very angry shareholders, who had seen their shares fall from 425p to 142p, into a personal fan club. "I stand here clothed in humility and a BHS suit," he told them.

He is a sort of Buddha of the design world; portly, contented and self-centred, with a collection

of small conceits. Conran has been his own boss almost since he left art school. It is difficult to imagine such an independent spirit taking orders from anyone. He is not a pompous man and has a wicked sense of humour. He loves gently winding people up. His wife describes his sense of humour as "low". "It tends to revolve around potteries and nuns," she says.

Conran's new year resolution is to lose weight. "That will depress him. He loves eating and he would hate to live on salad," she says.

Sean Sutcliffe, with whom Sir Terence runs a small furniture workshop from a stable building in the Conran family home at Kintbury, Berkshire, says Conran is a perfectionist. "He is meticulous. He will go to extraordinary lengths to ensure that a piece of furniture is just right. He hates things being unfinished, it's a legacy from his mother who taught him to finish everything. He has enormous energy and stamina and can easily outwork me. He has an uncanny vision and the ability to visualise a finished piece from a drawing. As a designer he just gets better and better. He can be frustratingly headstrong but he readily admits it if he is wrong."

Passion is the word most commonly associated with Conran. He cares passionately about everyday objects, about litter, about food, about shops, about all sorts of things. He is free from the cynicism that characterises many senior businessmen.

He disagrees violently with the philosophy that no one ever lost money underestimating the taste of the British public. "It is crass cynicism and it is used as an excuse by a lot of cynical retailers to peddle rubbish to people." He sounds almost angry but he insists he rarely loses his temper.

"I was once married to someone who made me lose my temper, thank God I'm not any longer. I sometimes pretend to be angrier than I am to get the adrenalin going." One thing he is angry about is the current state of the economy. "Politicians using the economy for their own political ends makes me angry," he says. "At the beginning of the Thatcher years people were encouraged to be entrepreneurial and form a genuine enterprise society. Those who did so have been totally let down by the government."

As part of his "nothing ventured, nothing gained philosophy", Conran has few regrets in life. One of the major ones, however, was his appointment of Michael Julien as chief executive of the ailing Storehouse Group. "I feel extremely sad that my dreams for Storehouse will now never materialise. I recruited Michael Julien because I thought he would be the right counterbalance for me. His skills would complement my skills. I thought he shared my vision for the group. I felt that what Storehouse needed was his disciplined approach to systems and finances."

"We'd gone through this really ghastly time of bids and bid rumours, firstly with Mountleigh and then Benlox. We needed someone of Michael's seriousness and solidness and lack of charisma. What I didn't realise was

that he wanted to have it all. He wanted to run the whole show. My wife saw it. She said: 'He is like Cassius and has a lean and hungry look'. He very soon started to do everything he could to demonstrate to everyone that he was running the show and that I had nothing to do with it. I felt terribly undermined during that period, very, very depressed indeed. I think it would have been different under someone else. Someone else may have respected my talents. My greatest regret is the hundreds of really terrific people who believed in the business and who have gone for no good reason."

Conran was born in London, in 1931, but his parents, Rupert and Christina, and his younger sister, Priscilla, moved to Liphook, Hampshire, just before the war. His parents came from well-off families both of which had lost everything in the 1929 crash. "My father was a terrific sportsman who had never really expected to work. But he had a business importing gum copal and rubber in Stepney. I remember sensing the excitement of the river when I was a boy and I am glad to be back on the river with Butlers Wharf. My parents lost a lot of money when my father's business was bombed in the war but, like many middle class parents, they crucified themselves for their children's education."

Conran was not academically inclined but his mother, recognising his creative talents, sent him to Bryanston School, Dorset, where craft, design and art were encouraged. Conran is a now a governor of the school. His mother was an important influence on his life.

After school he went to the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London, to study textile design. "I was taught by Eduardo Paolozzi, the sculptor. He taught me how to fry onions, make a risotto and gave me a taste for squid." They shared a furniture workshop.

He stayed at college for 18 months and left to take up a design job, one of the few going. After a spare working on the Festival of Britain, he set up his own furniture business and survived on commissions from architects. By 1955 he had diversified into shop fitting and exhibitions. Before long he was employing about 100 people, and the factory moved to Tedford, Norfolk, where for the first time he produced flat pack domestic furniture.

It was out of this manufacturing project that Habitat was formed in 1964. The first Habitat was in London's Fulham Road and it sold everything for the home. "The atmosphere was very like The Conran Shop today."

The chain expanded slowly. In 1967 Conran was approached by Reed Publishing, which expressed an interest in buying Habitat and turning it into a large chain. The takeover did not materialise, much to Conran's disappointment. Instead he formed a link with Ryman, the office equipment retailer.

Ryman's enthusiasm for Habitat evaporated quickly. "I became very disenchanted," says Conran who became joint chairman of the enlarged group. "The reason I'd done the merger was to expand Habitat and this was just not happening. Then one day Desmond Ryman said to me: 'Well, if you feel that passionately about your boutiques you had better buy them out of the business.' With the backing of Midland Montagu,



'Nothing ventured, nothing gained': Sir Terence Conran with Caroline, his second wife, who says he is enormously hardworking

Conran bought the business back. Habitat floated on the stock market at the end of 1979 and very soon afterwards Conran bought Mothercare from Selim Zilkha. The initial results were good, and a newly knighted Sir Terence went on to acquire Heals in 1983. Richards Shops was bought the same year and Now, a women's wear chain, was formed. Two years later came the ambitious £1.5 billion merger with British Home Stores, now BHS.

Conran insists this frenzied activity during the consumer boom of the mid-Eighties was not empire building as such. "My ambitions have always been for change. In BHS I saw a moribund operation with terrific sites and I believed there was an opportunity for a certain type of store. It was a challenge. I certainly have no regrets about Mothercare, or Heals, or Richards, or any of the other things. I do regret that BHS was a merger rather than a proper takeover because it left a void and

meant that no one made decisions."

The problem, according to Sir Terence, was the totally different cultures of the two businesses. Others believe Sir Terence simply had ambitions which outstretched his ability.

He is criticised these days for being a good designer but a bad businessman. "I'm not that bad. I did build up a business with a turnover of £1.5 billion, and the last time I was running Storehouse it had profits of £118 million. In my small way I run a number of very successful businesses. The Conran Shop is doing very well. I have made mistakes and I've never managed to get around me people who were able to run the administrative side of the business as efficiently as it should have been run. That's not my talent. I know it has to be done and the criticism could be made that I've picked poor people." But the City

has pinned the blame for Storehouse's current problems firmly on Conran's shoulders.

He would be the last to agree, but Conran appears happier and more competent running a series of small projects where he is in total control.

Besides The Conran Shop he runs The Design Museum, into which he has put £10 million. He runs the Blueprint Cafe, and Bibendum restaurants, Conran Roche, architects and town planners, and Benchmark, the small furniture company, where he spends every Saturday.

He is chairman of Jasper Conran, his son's fashion business, and a partner in Michelin House. He is starting a new restaurant in Butlers Wharf, called Post de la Tour, and trying to take The Conran Shop to Paris. He is chairman of RSCG Conran Design and a director of Conran Octopus publishing. He is designing Canary Wharf's food court and writing a couple of books. "While I was at

Storehouse I was still able to do all these things. Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

He enjoys spending time with his family. In addition to Caroline, his wife of 28 years and their three children, Tom, Sophie and Ned, he has two sons, Sebastian and Jasper by his first wife, Shirley Conran, authoress of *Superwoman, Lace and Savages*. In addition to the Kintbury house, he has homes in London's Eaton Terrace and in France. His wife has a house in Dorset. Buying ramshackle property and doing it up is a Conran family hobby.

"There are so many things I still want to do in my life, anything from designing a coffee table to designing a new store or restaurant. I'm frustrated about the amount of time I have to do it in. I am very lucky indeed that there is practically no moment of my working day when I'm not doing something that interests me. This is the great bit of luck I've had in my life," he says.

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WOLFGANG MÜNCHAU
IN BERLIN



Merger: Interflug and Lufthansa

zoned with Lufthansa's crane symbol.

BA was also interested in Interflug but, despite support by Germany's federal cartel office, failed to persuade the Bonn transport ministry.

Instead, the ministry opted for a pan-German solution rather than display its commitment to Eu-

rope. The wholesale group, BA had also talked to Kautz, the department store group, but without success.

The failure of Sabena, BA and KLM to link up with each other has increased doubts over whether Brussels can become Europe's principal hub airport, one of the main rationales behind the ill-fated venture. And other capitals are also badly placed: Paris is too regulated and London too peripheral. Berlin too is peripheral but its geographical position will improve when central and East European countries join the European Community.

However, there is little room to increase Berlin's capacity. Its main airport, Tegel, is only a few miles from the town centre, and much smaller than other German or European airports. Schönefeld, in eastern Berlin, where passport controllers still greet arriving passengers with the notorious stare-in-the-eyes, is also inadequate, so the German government is considering whether to construct a large out-of-town airport.

Even though Berlin might lose the race to become the seat of German government, great efforts are under way to make it the country's principal industrial and commercial city and a gateway to East Europe.

EASTERN Germany must be the only region in the world where airspace is worth more than land and industry. In spite of unification the region remains an industrial desert, while land carries almost no value because no one knows who might reclaim it. Industry does not produce what people want and the workers are ill-equipped to cope with a modern industrial society.

But airspace is precious. Air is to eastern Germany what gold was to Alaska and is equally unlikely to benefit the natives.

Lufthansa and British Airways, Europe's largest airlines, may be competitors but they have a common interest in the airspace.

Lufthansa was founded in Berlin in 1926, banned from there in 1945, and readmitted to Berlin last October.

By contrast, British Airways was one of the Allied Powers' Berlin-flight oligopolists, a privilege to be phased out in 1993.

Soon the two companies will announce their eastern German ventures. Lufthansa will acquire Interflug, the former East German state airline.

The prize is Interflug's slots in Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden and other central and East European cities, rather than the Soviet-built planes or the staff, neither of which are up

SUMMARY

GRE alert after agent arrested

INVESTORS who think they have money in a Guardian Royal Exchange broker bond run by Coventry Investments Group, its former tied agent, have been advised to contact the insurance company.

John Steel, operating as Coventry Investments Group, was the agent of GRE between April 1988 and June last year. This week he was arrested by West Midlands police and released on bail after an investigation by the Securities and Investments Board. It is alleged that up to £400,000 of investors' money is missing.

A spokesman for GRE said it did not allow its agents to operate bonds or to handle clients' money.

Mr Steel was also a non-executive director of Coventry Money Centre, selling products of other companies including a Crown Financial Management broker bond.

Conran inspired

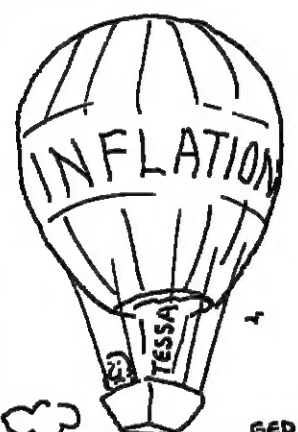


Sir Terence Conran, who changed the face of the British sitting room, has lost none of his energy and passion despite two setbacks. He talks to Gillian Bowditch. Page 39

Storm reports

Householders who have claimed repeatedly for storm damage during the bad weather of recent years are likely to face closer scrutiny by insurers. Page 38

Your views



Texas will do nothing to help the recession but will fuel another property boom by directing money into the banks and building societies, one reader cautions. Page 37

Gulf calm

The likelihood of war in the Gulf has not panicked most investors into moving out of equities. Page 36

BUSINESS

Treasury talks

A meeting between Norman Lamont, the Chancellor, and his top Treasury aides is taking place at Chevening, Kent, this weekend to consider ways of pulling the economy out of recession before an election. Page 34

Coal threat

Pressure for a rigorous round of pit closures will fall on British Coal Corporation if it fails to have levies imposed on imports. Page 30

THE SUNDAY TIMES

US bank crisis

"Thousands of depositors in the US are worried by America's banking crisis. Politicians and regulators are even more worried about the problems of rescuing the banking system, burdened by over \$31 billion of bad debts on property lending." Business, The Sunday Times tomorrow.

Eviction awaits victims of loan offers

Consolidation of debt can sound an attractive way to reduce outgoings in the face of big winter bills. But some lenders can exact a heavy toll, as

Lindsay Cook, Money Editor, reports

AS CHRISTMAS credit card statements, winter fuel bills and other demands arrive in the post, so does another seasonal offering: consolidation loans. Finance houses eager to sell loans to hard-pressed householders are offering ways of reducing monthly outgoings, but at a heavy price.

On one morning this week Christopher Bain, manager of the Birmingham Settlement Money Advice Centre, saw three people who once believed that such consolidation loans were the answer to their financial problems. One is days away from eviction, a second has lost his home, and the third has no arrears but cannot afford the repayments.

January is a peak time for such offers in newspapers, junk mailings and hand bills. The emphasis is often on the speed with which the loans can be arranged. For many households on the brink of debt the consolidation loan solution to their pressing bills is tempting. One reduced monthly payment covers all their debts.

One couple that took out a loan a year ago for £11,000, to pay for home improvements and to pay off other loans, now owes £18,000. They face eviction unless Mr Bain can persuade the county court to reopen the credit agreement and change its terms.

But the finance house that made the loan, with an annual percentage rate of 40.6 per cent, has taken no risk. The couple bought their home ten years ago and the difference between the value of the house and their small mortgage will comfortably cover the consolidation loan if the property is repossessed and sold. Had the couple managed to keep up the payments, they would have paid a total of £52,232.28 during the 15-year life of the agreement.

Mr Bain said: "They never worked out how much they would be paying back. These loans typically range between 40 and 50 per cent at the less reputable end of the market, even though the lender is taking no risk. There is enough value in the property to pay off the loan when the borrower is evicted." Building societies offer

secured loans as low as 18.9 per cent and try to ensure that the borrower can afford the payments.

Evictions can happen quite quickly. Companies that have made secured loans, where a building society or bank mortgage already exists, may offer to pay off the first mortgage so that they have the only claim against the property and can take the owner to court straightaway.

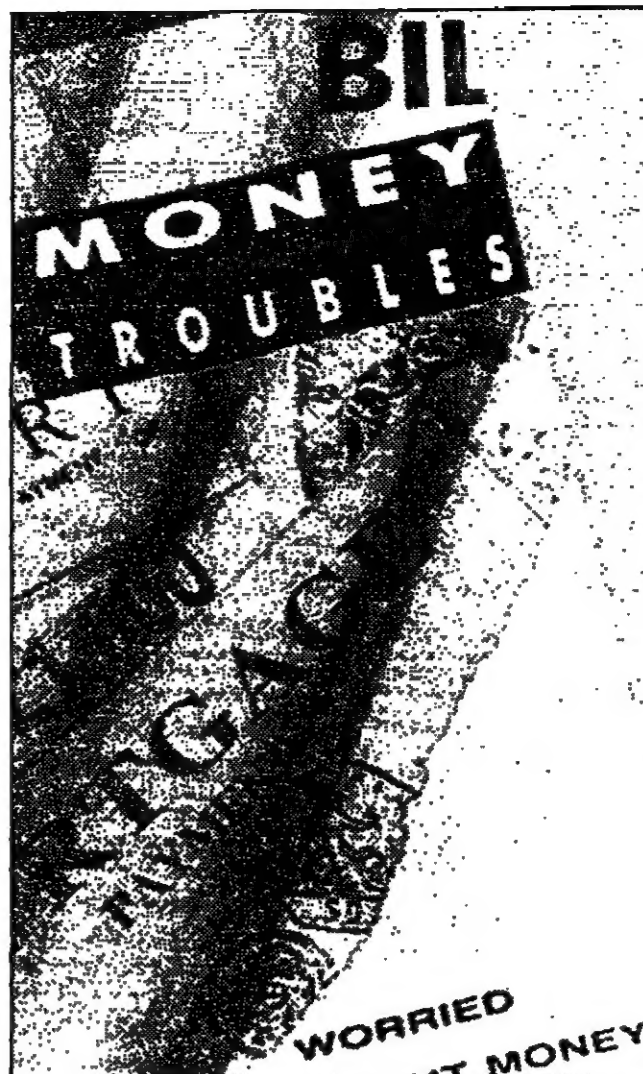
Mr Bain plans to apply to the county court for a time order under the Consumer Credit Act, which might allow the court to rewrite the loan agreement for the couple. Mr Bain said the powers have been little used because guidelines in the act were not specific.

Sir Gordon Borrie, director general of fair trading, is also concerned that the provisions of the Consumer Credit Act dealing with extortionate credit bargains have not been a success. Few cases have been brought and only a small number of these have resulted in the applicants paying a reduced rate of interest.

In October he called for a new regime for dealing with interest rates "which are so completely excessive as to be socially harmful". At the same time, he expressed concern at the way loans are marketed to people already in debt. The Office of Fair Trading has issued warning letters to companies known to be targeting these people. The lenders face losing their consumer credit licence if they do not take care in ensuring that their customers can afford the loans they have taken on.

The trade department last month proposed a tough, new credit regime. This should come into force later in the year and will require firms to print warnings that borrowers must make sure they can afford loans before they take them out and give a cooling-off period for them to change their minds about loan agreements.

Mr Bain said that too often people are embarrassed that they cannot pay their bills and find anonymous advertisements a much easier way to sort out their



Picking up the pieces: Christopher Bain, of the Birmingham Settlement Money Advice Centre, tries to sort out debt problems

problems. Often the contracts are expressed in legal jargon. "They can be extremely confusing and people do not always know what they are agreeing to."

The borrower who has already lost his home is a man in his early sixties who thought he was taking out a seven-year loan for £5,500 that would reduce his monthly outgoings. He actually signed a three-year agreement, which doubled his monthly payments.

He only had a small mortgage on the house, taken out 15 years earlier. When the property was sold, he received a lump sum after the loan and interest had been repaid, but it was not enough for him to buy another home.

A survey by the Office of Fair Trading on overindebtedness found that only 37 per cent of people said they took the annual percentage rate of a loan into account when borrowing. Even more disquieting was the fact that only 11 per cent of respondents

were aware that in the case of a secured loan it was possible to lose their house if they did not keep up repayments.

Since last February it has been a requirement of all advertisements for secured loans to carry a warning that failure to meet the payments can result in the loss of the borrower's home. The OFT has had difficulty in enforcing compliance with this "health warning" requirement.

Money advice workers still find that many people do not regard such secured loans as priorities for payment in the same way as their main mortgage.

Sara Merrick, of Camden Money Advice Centre, said: "They don't equate it with a mortgage. The amounts involved are often quite small but they can still lose their homes."

She said that it was not only people on low incomes who were tempted by such loans. "All sorts of people can be affected. They do not realise the sort of problems they may be taking on. We rarely see people as they decide to take on consolidation loans. We see them six months on when they are behind with the payments and may be under threat of a court hearing."

"People unable to afford current loans should contact those creditors and offer to pay what they

can afford. They need to work out their household budgets and keep those people they owe money to informed of the situation."

High street banks, building societies and other lenders were more disposed to be sympathetic if they were told what was going on, she added.

The National Consumer Council has issued a warning that

'We rarely see people as they decide to take consolidation loans. We see them six months on when they are under threat of a court hearing.'

people should take extra care with secured loans.

Debbie Leonard said: "People may lose their home for a few thousand pounds. Anyone considering such a loan should always go to a money adviser first. If they have a mortgage, their bank or building society may be willing to remortgage to clear other debts."

"The danger is where people have several unsecured loans such as credit cards and they take on a consolidation loan which puts their home at risk. If they cannot

pay their bills they should tell the companies and make an offer to make smaller payments until the debts are cleared."

"Post-Christmas is a big time for these loans when the bills start coming in. Things are a lot grimmer this year. There are a lot of youngish homeowners struggling with high interest rates who might try to borrow their way out of their problems."

Terry Walker, of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, said: "People do not understand the implications of secured loans. It appears to be a solution when, in fact, they are getting deeper into trouble."

"If they have unsecured debts such as credit cards they can be taken to a county court but they can only be made to pay as much as they can afford. If they have a secured loan the court will insist on the loan being repaid within a reasonable period or they lose their home."

Mr Walker said that bureaux were seeing a lot more court action than they used to.

"Consolidation loan and second mortgage companies tend to act more quickly than building societies."

"They may take someone to court after two missed payments. They argue they have to act quickly to get their money back."

Card fee ended in blacklist threat

A LONDON solicitor who cut up his Barclaycard in September in protest at the annual charge levied by the card company was threatened with credit blacklisting at the beginning of the year because he did not pay the yearly fee (Lindsay Cook writes).

Dominic Lang, a litigation solicitor in the City, paid off his full Barclaycard bill apart from the £8 annual charge in June. Then, after establishing that his Barclays Connect card could be used to guarantee cheques, Mr Lang cut up his Barclaycard and returned it to the company in September. He received an acknowledgement of the decision to close the account and confirmation that if the annual fee had already been charged this would be removed the following month.

However, statements continued to arrive showing the £8 fee and the interest accruing.

On top of this, a warning that a default notice was being issued arrived on January 3. If the notice had been issued, credit reference agencies would have been notified that he had failed to pay his credit card bill and he might have found it difficult to obtain loans in the future.

Since 1988, banks pass information to credit reference agencies when agreements with customers have totally broken down.

A spokeswoman for the British Bankers' Association said details of how much is involved or how many payments have been missed are not handed over.

"Banks only hand over details of the customer's name and address when the banker and customer relationship has ceased and it becomes a debtor/creditor relationship," she said.

Mr Lang wonders how many of the 500,000 active Barclaycard customers who have closed their accounts since June have been similarly threatened. "As a solicitor I knew what could happen and what they could and could not do. Other cardholders could be worried by the message on the statement," he said.

He is also concerned that some customers might not notice the small message at the foot of the statement and contact the credit card company before a default notice is issued. "I feel they should send a separate letter spelling out the consequences, so that it cannot be missed," he said.

After cutting up his card, Mr Lang at first ignored the state-



Lang cut up credit card

ments saying he owed £8 plus interest. Then in early December, he received a statement dated November 28 instructing him not to use the card "until your account is in order". Mr Lang, who was also waiting for a pasta machine to arrive in return for his Profile points, fired off a letter to Barclaycard Services on December 5 pointing out that as the company was in possession of the card the instruction was "somewhat superfluous".

Mr Lang told the company that he would have continued to ignore the statements, but for the fear of credit blacklisting.

He wrote: "I am becoming concerned about the possibility of my name appearing as some sort of bad debtor on a credit reference list. Please take immediate steps for the Barclaycard account to be closed, and confirm to me in writing within seven days that this has been done, otherwise I shall consider taking the matter further."

He received no reply. On January 3 his December 27 statement

arrived showing a balance of £8 plus 85p interest. Alongside the balance a message said £8 was "overdue and payable immediately", and that a default notice under the Consumer Credit Act was being issued. It said he must also pay 85p by January 24, and concluded: "You must comply."

Mr Lang wrote immediately to the credit card company pointing out that the £8 was no longer payable as the card had been returned. Barclaycard gave all its customers a year to cancel their cards, with the right to a refund of the annual fee, when it announced it was levying the charge. He gave the credit card company until January 11 to confirm that the account had been closed with a nil balance. Otherwise he said he would commence legal proceedings.

He also tried to telephone the company eight or nine times during the course of the day. But, according to the recorded message, all the customer services staff were busy because of "an unprecedented demand".

He later visited his own branch of Barclays and the manager there contacted Barclaycard on his behalf. This week a spokeswoman for Barclaycard said that the account had been closed. Arrangements had been made for a pasta maker to be delivered to his bank branch for him to pick up. She said a machine sent in August had failed to arrive.

A letter of apology had been drafted and would be sent to Mr Lang. The £8 had not been reversed because of a clerical error and that the letter Mr Lang sent to Barclaycard on December 5 had not arrived. When his letter of January 3 arrived at Barclaycard the company realised an error had occurred, she said.

The message on the December 27 statement had been triggered automatically after 90 days without payment on the account. "There would have been no question of a default notice being issued. Passing the details of an account in default is not an automatic procedure," she said.

Barclaycard would wait for 16 days after a message appeared on a statement and then would write or telephone the customer.

"We would seek to make contact and by 21 days after the notice would consider passing it on," she added.

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